

# Travelling Through Written Spaces: a nomadic enquiry into the writing of student teachers

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I am grateful to all of my participants. They were generous with their time and as any teacher knows, time is a most precious commodity, so I thank you unreservedly for this.

# Dedication

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For Jon.

We are symbionts, you and I.

# Abstract

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The thesis sets out to explore the potential and problematics of writing for students undertaking Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England. The focus of analysis is the written work that students produce as the final assessment piece for university-based taught units within ITE programmes. The thesis is motivated by the belief that this writing can serve as a powerful tool in student teachers' professional development and as such can impact directly upon their effectiveness as emerging professionals. The thesis draws on the author's experience of working with undergraduate Primary Education student teachers and is broadly based within a practitioner research paradigm.

The thesis critically analyses models of student writing that promote particular notions of professional development, progress and conceptualisations of text (writing). It is argued that these models privilege and rely on an interpretation of text that takes for granted its status as a medium for representation and its primary function as that of communicating meaning.

The thesis outlines and experiments with alternatives to such models, drawing on poststructuralist theory and concepts in the work of Deleuze and Guattari to rethink the potential in student teacher writing and research texts more generally. In doing so, the thesis presents an example of what happens when it is no longer assumed that text is capable of capturing writers' true intentions which feed unproblematically into their future practice. The thesis also presents an alternative conception of reading, and questions and experiments with what happens when both student teachers and teacher educators practice reading as a process of connectability rather than a task of interpretation or extrapolation of meaning. Conventional notions of 'data' are also troubled and the thesis presents and enacts a critique of data as passive material.

In addition to contributing to the understanding of the developmental potential in student writing, the thesis also contributes to a growing body of work that questions and reimagines what constitutes writing, research and data.

The technology of the essay can take me places I have [yet] to imagine.

(St. Pierre, 2000: 258)



## Part 1: Student writing: troubling current practice

# Chapter1: (dis) Orientation

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So here it is; the moment of reckoning. I wonder if other writers write in this way. Not just months, but years of preparation leading up, I feel, to this. Sitting here at a prepared desk, in a prepared room (decorated especially for the auspicious occasion of writing my thesis) hoping that the work I have done, the time spent, the people relied on, the family neglected will all, over the space of these pages, become worthwhile. In lots of ways these moments feel like the beginning of something and in some ways I engage with the process as a beginning of sorts; the beginning of a new phase of my studies perhaps – ‘the writing up-phase’. For you, the reader, I suspect this is the beginning proper, perhaps with the odd exception of those whose reading habits have forced a sneaky skim-through, or a cursory read of the ending.

As the writer however this is not my beginning proper. I have been immersed in this ‘writing-up phase’ for several weeks; possibly months or years and this beginning therefore is a beginning of convention only; a physical beginning perhaps, but not much more. For instance, these opening paragraphs, after much deliberation and shameful amounts of procrastination, finally slotted into place yesterday afternoon; not seated at this well-prepared desk but in the dining room, and only sat because suddenly possessed by thinking about writing, standing motionless in the middle of the room, after a while, felt too peculiar. Actual beginnings, as Margaret Atwood writes, are far more subtle; insidious even. ‘They creep up on you sideways, they keep to the shadows, they lurk unrecognised. Then, later they spring’ (2001:232).<sup>1</sup> I could no more find a single beginning to this thesis than I could locate a single point in time responsible for the person I think I am. I might however, be able to suggest possible *beginnings*; some key events that whilst at the time seemed no more

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst reading Margaret Atwood’s ‘The Blind Assassin’, I recognised the quote used here from a presentation given by my colleague Andy Pickard to a group of first year undergraduate students he was attempting to entice to study abroad. I liked the idea and have recreated it here.

or less important than the stuff of the 'everyday', eventually contributed to the beginnings of something I hadn't realised existed yet.

In terms of the writing I produce here, I might look to draw out some significant professional experiences or events, located as it is within the broad parameters of practitioner research. Significant both in terms of their effect or impact, but also as a result of the retrospective gaze that tends to imbue these kinds of moments as meaningful. This is important to note; once having 'sprung', my academic training forbids me from leaving these moments/experiences/events alone, and as such, they become what Foucault might describe as 'a history of the present', a concept explained by Walkerdine as 'the conditions of possibility of the present social forms and practices' (1986:60). Nonetheless, in-keeping with the tradition of many literary genres (I do not presume to separate completely what I produce here from other literary forms – a point I will elaborate on later), physical beginnings like this one benefit from a little scene setting and it is to this task I now turn.

## **Backstory**

Fed up with meagre earnings and the general duties of clearing up after other people that being employed to wait on tables entailed, I decided, at 20, that a new career path was in order. I chose teaching. I enrolled on an undergraduate, four year Primary Education programme at the nearest Higher Education Institution I could find. Over four years, I studied various units, some captured my imagination; others did not. I was particularly interested in the unit rather generically named 'Teaching Studies', which ran across the four years of the programme. The unit seemed distinct in that the experiences of the students were at its heart. Making sense of what happened to us and the children in school as we tried our hands at this thing called teaching was, I decided, an intriguing and illuminative business. In 2004 I graduated and began teaching in primary school. I also decided to continue my studies, opting for a masters programme within the Teaching Studies department. As an

undergraduate, the unit had inspired in me both an interest in the significance of experiences, as well as a desire to engage in 'the academic'; not yet ready to give that up, but also aspiring to quick ascension into leadership within my teaching career, the masters seemed an obvious choice. So far, so ordinary. Much to my surprise however, and after only four years as a primary school teacher, I was offered the position of Senior Lecturer in Primary Education at the institution I had successfully completed both my undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. The tutors that I had respected and admired became colleagues and I began, in retrospect, the somewhat difficult transition from teacher to teacher educator. I now teach across several programmes, on several units, all of which are sheltered under the comforting familiarity of the Teaching Studies umbrella.

During the early stages of this period of transition, I forged a set of expectations about my new role as a university lecturer. What I envisaged was not that different to that which I had become used to as a key stage two teacher<sup>2</sup>, in that, for the majority of the time I imagined I would be 'teaching'. In this instance (although hopefully not in many more), I understood teaching in the traditional sense, so for the purposes of my new role I pictured thirty or so students and I in a classroom, a whiteboard at the front, learning objectives visible and students sitting around tables... the standard learning picture. As the first year of my new career unfolded I adjusted to the routines and rhythms of my new working life. As it happened, the teaching was not altogether dissimilar to what I had imagined, save for the fact that I did not spend as much time doing it as I had previously thought I might. An aspect of the role I did not foresee was the sheer amount of time and effort devoted on the teacher educator's part to learning in 'other forms' and particularly, assignment writing. Planning what students should write about, preparing support materials, reading drafts, tutorials, the endless marking; all consumed an inordinate amount of time. As a student teacher myself I had been well aware of the significance of writing and understood it as an integral element of the student

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<sup>2</sup> Please see the glossary for a full explanation of the term **Key Stage Two teacher**.

experience; after all, with the exception of school-based training (SBT<sup>3</sup>), successful completion of all units rested on the production of assessed written work. As a teacher educator, I soon realised that assignment writing would be as much of a preoccupation of mine as it had been as a student.

To say that I thus pinpointed students' assignment writing as a focus for my doctoral research would be misleading. I have no recollection of exactly how or when I made the decision just that, at some point in time, I realised that that was what I was doing. In this sense, this beginning certainly crept up on me. The backstory above may lead you to think otherwise, but it is of course a backstory full of intent. The Teaching Studies connection for example, is one that only becomes significant in retrospect. Had I decided instead to write a doctoral thesis on, let's say, Sex and Relationships Education in the Primary School (this was the focus of my masters' work) then the backstory would have needed to serve a different purpose. But it is, after all, a narrative device, meant to position the narrator. If it has been successful in its aims, then I should be beginning to emerge as a writer inhabiting what I have slowly come to realise is a very strange place. I am a teacher educator and I have chosen to research my own teaching practice, a process which is communicated ultimately through the production of writing. The area of my practice on which I focus is the writing that I guide students in producing. This writing itself, being the ultimate communication of students' own research into their own practice as educators. This complicated relationship between form (the writing) and content (practice) is further complicated by the consistency and varied nature of my attachment to the Teaching Studies units as I have transitioned from student teacher, to teacher, to teacher educator.

## **Writing**

In the early stages of my research I often made the mistake of referring to student writing both in my discussion with participants and colleagues, as well

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<sup>3</sup> Please see the glossary for a full explanation of the term **school-based training** or **SBT**.

as in my own writing, as if the term signposted a universally accepted set of understandings. In actual fact, the writing I was, and am referring to, is rather specific and warrants further explanation. My interest lies specifically in what St. Pierre (2000) describes as 'the technology of the essay' (her views about which I will return to later) or what is more commonly referred to in the parlance of teacher education in England – 'the assignment'. Just as St. Pierre will be used to the quality of her writing being judged by book editors and journal referees with the ultimate mark of approval (although not necessarily purpose) being publication, the student assignment, not that dissimilarly, acts as an assessment tool allowing lecturers like me, through awarding body institutions to give a literal mark of approval, in the form of classified grades<sup>4</sup>.

This first identifying feature of the writing is particularly significant because it gives rise to several possible tensions and temptations which ensure that for the students writing for assessment purposes and for the researcher investigating it, it is often a fraught and complex business that takes some negotiation. Lea (1999), exemplifies some of these complexities via empirical evidence gathered as a result of her work and research in higher education institutions, drawing our attention for example, to the epistemological tensions that students often encounter between their 'everyday ways of knowing' and 'academic ways of knowing'. This tension was similarly borne out in my own empirical data gathered for the purpose of this study and whilst as an issue, this will not be a key focus within the chapters that follow, it is worth spending some time discussing it here to exemplify some of the types of concerns a study into the assessed writing of students is framed by.

Many students I interviewed, similar to those involved in the studies of Lea, spent a considerable amount of time explaining their difficulty in assuming a language which they associate with academia. For example, when asked to explain why she 'hated writing assignments' one interview participant responded:

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<sup>4</sup> Please see the glossary for a full explanation of the term **classified grades**.

*I don't know, I think it's cos I can never really put across what I'm trying to say properly so it always sounds wrong...*

(Interview transcript J/1, 2011: lines 15-16. Please see Appendix A.)

Another student shared similar concerns:

*...my writing style might not be... I'm not confident in the words that I use...*

*I mean, when I like read everyone else's papers I thought 'wow, look at all the big words they're using.' I just thought I can't... I don't do that, so that's what puts me down a little bit.*

(Interview transcript S/1, 2011: lines 114-121. Please see Appendix A.)

Lea (1999) suggests one of the ways in which students might respond to this perceived difficulty is by adopting what she describes as the 'reformulation approach'. This is where students identify aspects of the professional and/or disciplinary discourse they believe to be of significance and then rearticulate particular words and phrases they believe might exemplify these in order to demonstrate to their tutor that they have engaged in the course content and have developed a knowledge and understanding of the particular discipline they are working within. Elsewhere, Lea and Street (1998) liken students' perception of the assessed writing task to 'a game', as students not only attempt to reformulate an apparently appropriate language, but also engage in a process of game rule guessing, where students, individually and in groups, attempt to deduce the particular style and 'flavour' of writing that marking tutors prefer in order to tailor writing to the unique tastes of those responsible for awarding classified grades. This, whilst neither a surprising nor alien proposition (without shame, I admit to participating in this activity regularly as a student myself), is something that I will return to, over the course of the thesis. This is because it is both highly relevant in terms of the courses that I teach, where tutors work with groups of thirty or so students across an academic year and then assume the responsibility of assessing their written work, but also because of the level to which such practices shape written outcomes.

The second identifying feature of the student writing I will refer to throughout this work is defined by task. The Teaching Studies units have a distinctive

nature in that they adopt a phenomenological<sup>5</sup> approach to learning about one's own practice as a teacher. This approach is integral and permeates through all aspects of students' participation in the unit content. Pedagogically this is borne out through a commitment to value the students' experiences in school by the privileging of written and verbal accounts that allow students to relate their own interpretations of significant moments to a wider audience. Taught sessions are designed to allow students the opportunity and space to reflect upon, scrutinise and theorise their practice as well as those of colleagues and the children they come into contact with.

Relating this to the assessed writing task, and integrated very much with the activities students undertake within taught sessions, students are expected to produce what is often described in the course literature as a 'practice-orientated assignment'. Across the four years of the undergraduate degree and the one year postgraduate course, there are several (hopefully) developmental, variations in how this task is conceived, explained and judged, but there are several consistent features. Students are expected to write in the first person; the subject of the work they produce being themselves and their own developing practice as beginning teachers. The assignment, owing much to the work of Schön (1987) in its theoretical underpinnings, must be based upon a written reflection of an event and to this end students are encouraged to begin the writing process by recalling recent school experiences, focusing on specific events that they regard as pivotal or particularly pertinent to their professional development journey. This may constitute a lesson which they taught and then subsequently felt to be unsatisfactory, a comment from a child they thought indicative of some wider aspect of their practice, or, indeed, the observed practice of others they wish to emulate. It is perhaps interesting to note here that this type of activity, often referred to under the general guise of 'reflective practice', has become somewhat synonymous with many university-based teacher education programmes. As a pedagogical device, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) attribute the popularity of reflective practice to the ways in

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<sup>5</sup> Phenomenology, as described by Titchen and Hobson (2005) is the study by those who experience them, of the lived, human phenomena that occur within everyday social experience.



which it enables those involved in teacher education (including the student teachers themselves) to tell an alternative story about what it might mean to become and be a teacher; a story that runs counter to the prescribed and technical version often presented by policy makers. This technical aspect of teacher training will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis. (Please see chapters 3 and 5.)

Returning to the students' writing task - moving on from reflection, students must also demonstrate development or growth in their understanding in relation to particular aspects of their professional work. This growth of understanding most often takes the form of applied literary or literature-based research - 'applied', because the research should directly influence the process of anticipating future professional practice. Essentially the student teacher must demonstrate the specific ways in which their writing will shape and improve their professional skills.

There are several different articulations of this process. For example, in the first year unit the students are asked to:

Write a context-based, practice orientated, 3000 word assignment from the view point of what you have found in your SBT placement. Your assignment should consider the challenges and opportunities your SBT setting provides, both in terms of your own teaching and the children's learning. You should consider and begin to critically explore how you might work to overcome challenges and/or make the best of opportunities you are presented with. Discussion should demonstrate that you are able to critically analyse aspects of teaching and learning and the factors which impact upon these in practice enhancing ways.

(Manchester Metropolitan University: 2011a)

In their fourth and final year of study, students are asked to ensure their writing demonstrates their ability to;

Critically review practice constructively and creatively and identify benefits and improvements which will lead to enhanced practice.

Improve professional practice with a specific focus on the effectiveness of lessons and/or approaches to teaching.

For the purposes of this study, when I refer to student writing, I presume to evoke a general understanding of the kinds of principles and practices described above.

## **Writing and learning**

Whilst I may struggle to identify exactly when student writing became my choice of focus for this thesis, I am able to be more precise about the evolution of the early stages of the research and the motives that propelled its development. Before I embark upon explaining these, I feel it is important to clarify a couple of key points about the nature of this research, my influences and importantly, begin to outline some of my own epistemological assumptions regarding what constitutes knowledge and learning. I will, as the thesis progresses, return to all of these points and in doing so will be more diligent in assuring them their due attention, however for now and for the purpose of giving the next section of this chapter some (almost) secure theoretical grounding, I will refer only to a couple of key influences and the ways in which I believe they have impacted upon me.

Embarking upon my doctoral studies I would often find myself fixating on one of the central tenets of research at this level; the idea that the doctoral students' research must make a 'contribution to knowledge'. Despite my best efforts, I cannot help but find this simple statement deeply unnerving. It immediately conjures up images of old, ornately housed libraries; shelves stacked high with beautifully bound volumes, within whose covers (should one take the time to read them) there can be found 'knowledge'. The idea that I might contribute to this sacred canon, seems to my mind, mostly ridiculous. During the more optimistic phases of my study, I have, however, allowed the fantasy to extend to something along the following lines... a neatly dressed librarian quietly makes her way through the maze of shelving carrying a rather small,

but nonetheless beautifully bound (rather regally in red and gold) book. She squeezes it carefully between the stacks of much more impressively sized works; the gold lettering on the spine reading simply – Dr. Michaela Harrison.

This fantasy is revealing firstly for what it says about how knowledge is popularly conceived and secondly because I am reluctant to accept this as a reality. The dusty volumes, which much to my irritation I understand mid-fantasy (even if only subconsciously) to be mostly written by men, are representative, I believe, of the kind of knowing that 'sits still'. Not to be confused with that which is created in moments of quiet stillness, this is the kind of knowledge that is static; wonderfully stable and free from doubt, contradiction and general uncertainty. This formulation of knowledge, which has so often proven itself as my mind's default position, especially at times of worry and stress, is not, in actual fact, how I have come to understand the process by which we can come to understand the world at all. I have, in more lucid moments, come to realise that rather knowledge is a) partial and constrained (so always in doubt and uncertain) and b) necessarily discursively constructed (so incapable of being transmitted unproblematically from writer to reader and therefore bound up with questions of representation). This, as Britzman (2003) explains, disturbs the somewhat populist notion that there is a reality out there waiting to be known and then captured through language by researchers such as myself. In the fantasy above, this is what I imagine to be held in the dusty volumes – an exposition of the real, written down for me by someone who 'knows'. Indulging myself in the reading of poststructuralist<sup>6</sup> works has however allowed me the opportunity to see through this 'default position' and realise that the doubt and scepticism it creates in me, rather than something to worry about, might rather provide a theoretically sound basis from which my project might grow.

My reluctance to accept that knowing is static and easily accessible through language, I intend to exemplify here. To do this I will employ a technique which I believe allows me to both explain something more of how my research, in its

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<sup>6</sup> Poststructuralism, as the overarching research paradigm within which I situate my work, will be explained cumulatively over the course of the thesis and more extensively in Chapter 6.

early stages evolved, but also the opportunity to reflect in action the theoretical principles I outline above. It is a method I borrow from Pearce (2007) and whilst I have used similar devices in previous writing, the extent to which I have done so is lesser than that which I embark upon now. Paying due attention to the temporal nature of knowledge and knowing, Pearce reflects on her own previous research output with a critical hindsight that can only be employed as new theoretical and ethical frameworks are developed. She takes care not to dismiss her past work, but rather makes use of it in understanding the development of her own position and theorising in relation to her involvement in the academic discipline of literary theory. Pearce explains the technique via a metaphor of attempting to cross a river, jumping from one slippery stone to another, propelled forward only to find each new footing no more secure than the last. Of the journey from one side of this metaphorical river to the other she writes;

...the rocks on which we stand as readers [or writers] are ever liable to be swept away from under us... It seems to me that this precarious journey of ideological and ethical scrapes, of (inter)textual twists and turns, is not one that could be told 'straight'; that it is predicated upon the recognition that none of us will ever make it to the (politically) safe ground on the other side of the river.

(1997:41)

To my mind, this speaks of the caution with which poststructuralist thinkers need to proceed and the constant vigilance that is required to avoid the danger, as St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) warn, of contributing to the replacement of one regime of truth with another. Poststructuralism does not claim to have 'gotten it right', rather, it offers critiques and methods for examining the functions and effects of any structure or grid of regularity that we put into place, including those that poststructuralism itself might create (2000:6). A process I will attempt to make use of throughout my thesis.

The following then, constitutes some initial writing I undertook in the very early conceptions of my thesis, in September 2009. It is the introduction to a paper I produced for a doctoral student conference and is reproduced here to outline

some of my early concerns, beliefs and assumptions regarding the processes involved in, and the final product of, student teachers' writing. The focus is particular to how writing and learning are connected.

### September 2009

In many ways the concept of progress seems unproblematic. In relation to teaching, and specifically teacher education, progress is often described in terms of 'professional development'; a phrase which has become common parlance within English educational settings and usually refers to the process by which student teachers demonstrate growth and improvement in their professional skills. Currently, and as long as there remains a strong academic component to the process of learning to become a teacher, students will often be required to demonstrate the ways they have developed professionally or 'made progress', through the production of assessed writing.

If this process of writing is to be of value for students, writing must be able to do more than provide a means of evidencing something that has already taken place. Students are able to demonstrate their practical capabilities during the school-based training element of their course, during which the assessment of their teaching ability will be ongoing, as they are involved in the process of reflecting on and evaluating practice, listening to, and acting upon feedback, and setting targets. Rearticulating this learning in the form of writing for assessment purposes seems wasteful. Rather writing should constitute a learning process within itself, where new understandings are sought and further development the goal. This relationship between writing and learning is well established (Crème, 2000; Holly, 1989; Hoover, 1994; Parker, 2010). Lea and Street for example, describe student writing produced across a range of academic disciplines and subject cultures as a 'central process.....through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study' (1998:158). While, Gay et al. (1999) assert that writing for student teachers constitutes a 'crucial aspect' of their ongoing development.

It is not the intention of this paper to question this relationship. In fact it is upon the assumption that 'learning and writing are intimately connected' (Pickard, 2004) that this paper is based. Rather, the notion that writing can be regarded as a tool for learning and more specifically here, professional development, acts as a base from which questions concerning *how* this process might be realised, can be explored further.

To this end the paper begins with an explanation of a model of writing students are currently expected to engage with as part of the Teaching Studies component of the Primary Education undergraduate degree at a popular institute of higher education. The model presents students with the opportunity to demonstrate the ways in which the process of writing has actively contributed to their professional development as

they are required to articulate the impact of the learning they have undertaken on their future classroom practice. Several extracts of writing composed by two undergraduate student teachers are offered as examples of how such requirements might be interpreted. Although a critique of the writing produced by the two students is included, the paper does not seek to criticise or make judgements about the quality or indeed, the academic abilities of the authors, nor to disregard the models of student writing on which they are based, rather the intention is to 'open up' (Stronach and MacLure, 1997) spaces for questions to be asked about how such models are constructed and why students might respond to these in certain ways. The implications of such constructions on the ways in which key themes within this paper, specifically progress and professional development, are represented, are also considered. Drawing on a range of contemporary poststructuralist writers and based upon attempts to deconstruct popular interpretations of these key themes, the paper then seeks to present possibilities for alternatives.

My intentions in reproducing this writing here are as follows; firstly, it is to draw attention to the assumptions about writing and learning on which my thesis is predicated. My reason for drawing attention to these in this way, is not to imply that I no longer believe in writing as a tool for learning, rather to demonstrate that whilst my research evolved from a hypothesis that writing and learning are connected, the ways in which I conceptualised this relationship changed quite dramatically over time. In short, it became much more complicated than writing = learning. Whilst it may not have been my original intention to question the relationship between them, ultimately, as my conception of each and their connections to one another as well as 'the world outside' grew, so did the need for me to rethink what this relationship might constitute.

It was before this point however that I was asked, as part of the required structure for my research proposal, to pose a set of research questions. As a result of this timing, the research questions I settled upon were as follows:

How might writing be used as a tool for learning?

How might I, as a teacher educator, make the process of writing one of value for the students that I teach?

As the project evolved however, and I engaged in the process of conceiving of and trying my hand at possible writing alternatives that might add value to the

students' experience of writing, I began to consider not just how I might answer the research questions I had posed but also the limitations of the questions themselves and what their construction said about me as an emerging teacher educator, the discipline of teacher education more generally and the complicated relations between identity, agency and discourse. I began to consider the extent to which my questions evoked a particular set of responses and in doing so, repressed the possibility of thinking elsewhere. What this meant for my research was that ultimately the trajectory skewed and its directions multiplied. I was, in the event, happy for this to occur, as the more I thought about my own writing and research the more eager I was to remain open to encounters that in both form and content are different to those we might expect (Mazzei & McCoy 2010).

Leading on from this, my second intention in including the writing from 2009 is to allow myself the opportunity to address, through carefully constructed 'responses', the complex and often contradictory position I find myself in, in the process of writing about writing. It is one of a number of 'responses' I intend to make throughout the course of this thesis. I use the term 'response' to denote the commitment I have made to reflect in my own writing style and thesis construction the quandaries, dilemmas and proposed alternatives I identify (or sometimes stumble upon) in my scrutiny of the writing of students. In other words, I intend my thesis to be orientated around praxis. I will 'try out' familiar writing rituals and experiment with the unusual. The reason for the responses is simply that the more I indulged myself in thinking about students' writing and in particular how they represent their learning within it, the more I came to think of my own writing as responsible in some way to doing justice to the theoretical positions I found myself extolling. I could not for example question the oft-held view of writing as an innocent process that merely allows for mass and unproblematic access to the thing we seek to represent, without giving serious consideration to the ways in which I engage in the act of representation myself. One of my initial concerns about writing is the ways it often works, especially in practitioner research texts, to conceal its production; presented as

if writing about one's own learning is a seamless and linear process that doesn't involve backtracking, changes of mind, mistakes and the like. I wanted therefore, to avoid reproducing a narrative that would suggest an original concern or set of questions could and would be resolved. Writing in 2009, I felt a sense of certainty about the direction of my thinking, in that I had clearly marked out the problem (that particular forms of writing are predicated upon humanist notions of knowledge, reason and, in particular, progress<sup>7</sup>) and that the remainder of the thesis would therefore constitute the consideration of possible alternatives to a model of writing I felt suspicious toward. The inclusion of the 2009 extract here marks a point at which this certainty has dissipated.

## **Thesis and chapter outline**

The thesis I present is the result of a small-scale, empirically based study that I have undertaken in my role as a teacher educator. The central focus of the project is to investigate the ways in which writing might function as a resource for learning. The main participants in the study were undergraduate students enrolled on a four year Initial Teacher Education programme. Some of the participants in the study contributed on an individual basis by, for example, allowing me to reproduce and analyse the writing they had submitted for assessment. Other students participated as part of a wider group. In my role as Unit Tutor I am assigned groups of approximately thirty students for whom I am responsible for the duration of the academic year. This responsibility extends to leading seminars, engaging in tutorials and reading and assessing students' assignments. Two of these groups of thirty students were asked to participate in the project collectively.

As previously discussed, whilst the parameters of the project were initially designed to allow for the scrutiny of student writing practices, the scope of the project broadened as it evolved. As a result, as the thesis unfolds, the reader

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<sup>7</sup> This notion is explained and explored further in Chapter 2.



will realise that the focus on student writing begins to merge with and envelop a concern for the problematic of writing more generally.

The thesis is presented in two parts. Part 1 lays the groundwork for the empirically based study that follows. Contextual and conceptual frameworks are offered with the intention of situating the empirical study detailed in Part 2. This process begins with the chapter that follows.

In Chapter 2 I explore some of the forms and guises of writing for learning. In doing so, I further scrutinise the model of student writing explained above that features so predominately in my working life as a teacher educator. This process is achieved via an analysis of writing offered by two undergraduate students for the assessment of their Teaching Studies unit.

My aim in Chapter 3 is to suggest some alternatives to the textual practices that I claim as having become ingrained in the Teaching Studies element of the Initial Teacher Education programmes I work within. In considering alternative discursive practices, the chapter attempts to destabilise some of the myths about what writing is and how it might function.

Chapter 4 constitutes something of a turning point. It details a development in the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis which unfolds to be of significant consequence. It documents my introduction to and growing theoretical investment in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2004). The chapter serves as an introduction to a conceptual framework I endeavour to deploy in the remainder of the thesis. Several Deleuzo-Guattarian 'figures' or characters through which they map their philosophy are explained and examined. The aim of the chapter is to explain the process by which I came to know and understand these figures and to communicate something of their qualities and how these might be of use in my research project as a whole.

In Chapter 5 I set out to explain and examine the world of primary education that the student teachers, central to my thesis, inhabit. In doing so, I detail something of the social, political and often economic factors that have shaped the conditions of teachers' working lives and the educational experiences of the

children they teach. In order that this historical overview of the development of educational norms and practices is not reduced to an exposition of dates and details of policy, I orientate the chapter around vignettes that are intended to represent something of the world of teaching and learning in the primary school. The vignettes are utilised as a basis for analysis and conjecture around how the policy shifts and progress narrative detailed in the chapter might shape the range of possibilities for action and thought for student teachers and teacher educators.

In Part 2 the design and implementation of the empirical study are detailed, followed by the analysis of gathered data. Chapter 6 outlines the methodology of the study. It builds on the conceptual, theoretical and contextual framework presented in Part 1 and so poststructuralist, qualitative models of research are examined in more detail. As this chapter functions as the introduction to the empirical element of the thesis, I also spend some time detailing the elements of the project for which I adopted an action research methodology. Details of the study are offered and ethical and practical considerations are explained.

In Chapter 7 I begin to explain and examine some of the changes I made to my practice – the ‘action’, of the ‘action research’ described in Chapter 6. The intention of the changes, or adaptations to practice was to experiment with possible responses to the research question; ‘How might I, as a teacher educator, make the process of writing one of value for the students that I teach?’ I describe the method of ‘implicated reading’, an activity I designed, based on the work of Alvermann (2000), to encourage students to think about the process of writing differently. The method is evaluated against the perceptions of the students that participated in the study.

Chapters 8 – 10 can be read as a sustained and collective attempt to put Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology to work. Chapter 8 is organised around a lengthy extract of “data”. The transcript is from a recording of a Teaching Studies session in which I modelled the process of implicated reading to a group of students. The transcript is used to illustrate the potential and problematics of teaching and learning rhizomorphously. It is also intended to provide the reader

with an example of implicated reading (to answer the question – ‘what does implicated reading look like?’) so the process can be contemplated as it was experienced by the students. The chapter signals the first point in the thesis where data itself is problematised. This theme is continued in chapters 9 and 10.

Chapter 9 is another example of implicated reading, however here it is used more precisely as a method of data analysis. This requires a shift in the ‘usual’ conceptualisation of both analysis and data. In this chapter, the edges of ‘data’ and ‘analysis’ as concepts are blurred. The chapter constitutes an implicated reading of a selection of texts, including a re-reading of some of the data analysed in Chapter 7. The readings in Chapter 9, rather than focus on the extrapolation of meaning, draw upon a more dynamic, inter-textual set of relations. The texts (“data”) are allowed to interact with one another as well as myself, as the researcher/writer. The result is a different form of analysis which aims to create the conditions that allow data to produce what otherwise may have been left unthought.

The disruption to data and analysis continues in Chapter 10. Here the concepts of data and analysis are fractured possibly beyond the recognisable. In an attempt to write against the grain of normalised qualitative research practice and to experiment with what might be the potential limits of data/analysis, I create “data” in the form of a ‘play’ that is intended to write into being two key Deleuzian principles – the critique of the self-conscious “I” and desire. In doing so, I contemplate further the process of writing for students; its potential as well as in what, who and where it might be constituted.

In Chapter 11, I draw the thesis to a close, attempting to summarise its value, contribution to the field, its strengths and weaknesses and so on. I also consider what I have learned from the process of being a doctoral researcher/writer.

## Chapter 2: Assumptions, Myths and Regulatory Practices

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Having already explained in Chapter 1 some of the general features of the student writing I intend to examine in this thesis, I want to now focus more specifically on some of the aspects of the writing task, particularly its foundations in practice and how this is articulated through the assignment requirements.

Much of the assessed writing tasks students are asked to undertake, across all years of the programmes, require that they reflect on past experiences in school. This process of reflection is a central feature of the Teaching Studies unit. Students are therefore asked to produce written reflections (albeit alongside more informal, conversational reflective activities during seminars) in the form of a Learning Journal. These written reflections on past events become an integral feature of the taught element of the unit. For example, during seminars, analytical frameworks that might be applied to the analysis of the reflective writing are offered, modelled, practised and critiqued. Students are also asked to share their reflective writing with their peers and are encouraged to identify common themes, which are used as catalysts for discussion and learning around shared concerns. In short, the reflective writing acts as data via which the students can analyse aspects of their own practice and their understanding of it. The reflective writing therefore is an important element both in the context of the taught unit as whole, as well as in the eventual construction of their final assignment.

Most often these reflective accounts take the form of 'stories', where students recount significant events. The events might be anything from the extreme (children 'escaping' from school) to the more mundane (a child asking if they can leave the classroom to visit the bathroom). Students are also asked to consider how the stories might be used as starting points for thinking about

how improvements to their teaching and hopefully, as a result, the children's learning might be made.

Accounts that recount and reflect on the professional lives of teachers as a starting point for learning about and improving practice is a common feature of many teacher education courses (see for example, Collin and Karsenti, 2011; Larrivee, 2000; Mansvelder-Longayroux et al., 2007 and Richardson, 1990) and as such, warrants further consideration here. As previously discussed, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Teaching Studies units is the foregrounding and privileging of students' experiences in school. Experience as a starting point for learning and more specifically, practitioner based enquiry, is a well-established convention. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) for example, understand experience as inseparable from education and its study. They recognise the work of Dewey as being pivotal in the transformation of the term 'experience' from one which is every day and commonplace, to one of key educational significance. For them, Dewey's work draws attention to the fact that enquiry into social phenomena needs to have at its heart a recognition that people (and for our purposes here, educational practitioners as well as those they educate) are individuals. This might seem obvious, however research in the social sciences has a long tradition of suggesting otherwise, as Usher claims:

One could argue that there is a discourse of how research should be done, not only in the natural sciences but in the human and social sciences also. ...it is a discourse characterised by a universalising thrust and totalising aim and which therefore tends to be intolerant of difference.

(1997:11)

The privileging of an individual's lived experience allows us to be attentive to the fact that whilst the social sciences are, in effect, interested in social contexts, social contexts can only ever really be understood in relation to those individuals who experience them and thus, need to be open to difference – less 'totalising and universal' and more 'individual'. In experience, both the personal and the social are always present. The Teaching Studies units, particularly those that I have focussed upon for the purpose of this study, are well

grounded in this philosophy. Indeed, I have a habit of sharing a crude outline of Dewey's theories of experience with my students as a way of validating my interest and encouraging theirs, in the stories they each tell about their work in schools. I have found that whilst students often appreciate exploring the theoretical underpinnings of the methods we employ in sessions, and I am happy to provide these, recalling school experiences is usually a task met with enthusiasm regardless. It is an activity to which everyone can contribute. It is immediately relevant and allows students the opportunity to realise that the concerns they have are usually shared (this is important, as often students undertake school placements in isolation – as the only student teacher within a school). Details of the skills, ideas and strategies they have developed through practice are also eagerly received. However, the recalling of experience is not all that is asked of them. Students are of course required to write these experiences down.

Often referred to as 'journal writing' in the course literature, the requirement of writing down experiences is often met with a little more reluctance than the sharing of experience through discussion tends to generate. This reluctance is well documented (Chandler, 1997; Dymont and O'Connell, 2010 and Mills, 2008). Asking that the students participate in the activity voluntarily, in my experience has been met with varied levels of success, however for many of the units, and particularly the final year unit, these written accounts are simply 'required' as they form the basis of the final assessed piece and students are required to produce them to be shared with their peers during taught sessions. Despite some reluctance on behalf of the students, there is much research into the value of committing experience to paper (Holly, 1989; Hoover, 1994 and McGarr & Moody, 2010). For the purposes of the Teaching Studies units, the written accounts of experience are used in a similar way to that proposed by Clandinin and Connelly, in that they are seen both to be a method of enquiry into one's own practice and also as an object under enquiry. As a method of enquiry, and working under the assumption that the written accounts are representative of the event as encountered by the student, the writer has the

opportunity to view the experience from a distance. This distance allows the writer to examine practice from a perspective gleaned with time and space away from 'the action'. This may allow, as suggested by Holly;

...the benefit of moving through time... without being caught in the action. In a sense... reliving the action, but with an outside observer's perspective.

(1989:163)

Encouraging the students to understand the written reflective accounts as objects of analysis themselves is, I have found, a more difficult task and one with which we tend to struggle. I will elaborate on this in later chapters (see the subsection 'The final myth' in Chapter 3). For now however, it is important to say that the same theoretical principles that I began to outline in Chapter 1 (that writing is not a straightforward and necessarily innocent process) can be applied to the written accounts of experience as much as they can to the written task as a whole. The reflective accounts may also then be scrutinised as 'constructed' data and, as such, may well reveal much more than what the author intends to represent. As Brodkey (1987) reminds us, a narrative of experience and experience itself should never be confused as one and the same thing.

The popularity of pedagogic models orientated around reflective accounts of experience and their consistency of use, particularly within the four year undergraduate course, have ensured some familiarity with it as a model for both taught sessions, as well as a basis for students' assessed writing. My own level of familiarity with the structures detailed here is even more acute, having been involved in learning and then teaching (though clearly in this context the two are not mutually exclusive) in this way, for such a protracted period. The line between familiarity and over-familiarity is a blurred one and it is perhaps the very convivial nature of this way of working that, for me at least, warrants the closer examination of the practices involved and the discourses that shape these. Attempting to 'look awry' (Žižek, 1991) at the familiar, to attempt to produce a different way of knowing, perhaps through different means, is

according to St. Pierre and Pillow (2000), the (poststructuralist feminist) educator's task.

In the early stages of my research, I spent some time subjecting the model of student writing that had become so familiar, to scrutiny. In doing so, the model became strange and the sense that 'it left a lot to be desired' (Lacan, 2008 cited in Taylor 2010: 9) began to creep into my formerly comfortable and comforting readings of the process of student writing as envisaged in the Teaching Studies unit. The remainder of this chapter details this process.

### **Student Writing: Initial analysis – writing ourselves better**

At the time of writing, the structure of the fourth and final year undergraduate Teaching Studies unit required students to submit a single piece of assessed writing after the taught element of the unit had ended. Working my way through assessing these final assignments, I noticed a pattern beginning to emerge in how several students approached the task requirements. Initially only anecdotal in nature, I decided to produce a more detailed examination of the writing to validate my concerns. I focussed on pieces submitted by two students in order to provide an empirical basis for my hypothesis.

The two students were chosen opportunistically. For reasons not related to this project, both students had made e-mail contact with me following their successful completion of the unit. Knowing that I would be able to complete a more detailed analysis of their writing than the normal marking and moderation procedures had allowed during the summer months, I simply took the opportunity to invite the students to participate in the project via e-mail communication<sup>8</sup>. The following analysis includes extracts of the students' writing, supplemented with my own commentary to summarise longer pieces of writing that would have been cumbersome to reproduce here in full. (The assignments were approximately 5000 words in total.)

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<sup>8</sup> Both students gave their consent for sections of their writing to be reproduced for publication. Evidence of consent can be found in Appendix B.



## **Student one: Yemena<sup>9</sup>**

### **Presentation of Data**

In the following extracts Yemena can be seen attempting to fulfil the requirements of the written task. She begins as many students tend to, by recalling an event/occurrence which has shocked and upset her.

*During my first year placement I was in a school in a socially and economically deprived area. I taught a nursery class in which there was a three year old boy, his mother had a drug addiction and worked as a prostitute.*

The student goes on to describe the boy's behaviours; he is protective of his food and often arrives late for school. Yemena understands these behaviours to be direct consequences of the child's home circumstances but understands that neither she nor the class teacher she is working with has the power to directly influence the boy's home situation. However, despite observing behaviours she finds worrying, Yemena also notes how much the boy appears to enjoy school. She reasons this must be the result of a good teacher and explains that rather than submit to powerlessness and simply accept the boy's home situation as out of her control, the class teacher instead ensures she adapts the lessons she delivers to suit the needs of the child. Yemena believes this to be the best course of action in a professionally difficult situation and as such desires to emulate the approach she observes.

*I will now explore how I can use the curriculum and other aspects of schooling to help children's emotional wellbeing so that they enjoy and achieve when they are in school by personalised learning.*

Yemena then proceeds to speculate on possible strategies she might employ in order to help her 'personalise learning'. None of these relate directly to personalising learning for children who suffer neglect and/or extreme home circumstances, rather they are general strategies she has gleaned from reading. Yemena concludes by describing the methods she will now employ so that in the future, she will be able to personalise learning more effectively;

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<sup>9</sup> Students' names have been changed.

*Firstly, I will personalise assessment to involve children in the process and use assessment/observation to learn about their likes and dislikes before implementing them into planning. Secondly, I will use the information from assessments to differentiate in three ways: task, outcome and learning style.*

*I examined the different ways of personalising learning, which I had no previous knowledge of, this has allowed me to find the best way to do this when I have a class and therefore in turn will help me become a more well rounded effective teacher.*

## **Analysis<sup>10</sup>**

If the aim or purpose of student writing is to demonstrate professional progress then Yemena's conclusion here ensures the reader is left in no doubt as to the success of her endeavours. Her writing presents the reader with a perfectly linear transformation or 'victory narrative' (Pillow, 1997) where practices are visibly bettered and Yemena is, as a result, able to move seamlessly from a state of lesser capability to one of more knowledgeable, more able and generally more 'effective teacher'. In such a way, Yemena's writing can be seen as meeting the expectations of the writing task as detailed above. She is able to identify the importance of personalised learning strategies in her teaching and subsequently, through the application of literature-based research, is able to demonstrate a process of growth in professional knowledge relating to these issues. She has learnt new ways of teaching and in anticipating how these might shape her future practice, she is able to conclude that there has been a direct and positive impact on her abilities to be an 'effective teacher'.

However, there is another criterion against which the success of Yemena's writing is judged. The course literature also includes the requirement that Yemena's writing should be 'personal'. This requirement, although perhaps seemingly one amongst many, might be regarded as the defining feature of the model of writing under scrutiny here, as it is through the construction of a personal narrative, that many of the other features of the text are

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<sup>10</sup> In its original form this analysis was undertaken as a continuation of the 2009 paper reproduced in Chapter 1. As a result of being incorporated into the wider thesis, the analysis was rewritten and extended during the period 2010-2012.

demonstrated. The writing itself is, or at least should exhibit features of a 'personal discourse'.

This requirement is articulated in Teaching Studies related course literature in a variety of ways. From the concise; 'This piece of writing should be personalised to your own professional journey'; taken from the 2011-2012 Year 4 Teaching Studies Unit Handbook (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2011b:16) to the more expansive;

...we are looking for you to introduce yourself into your accounts of teaching very explicitly because in these accounts the object you will be contemplating is yourself. You will need to explore and examine the way in which you are led to assign meaning and value to your conduct, your sense of duties and responsibilities, your feelings and sensations and sources of professional satisfaction, your hopes, your ambitions and aspirations for the future.

Taken from the 2011-2012 Year 3 'guidance on writing your assignment' handbook (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2011:15)

Unit handbooks change every year and at the time this analysis was undertaken, the unit literature read:

[You will] present a personal discourse demonstrating growth in understanding of professional issues and knowledge of the links between theory and practice.

Taken from the 2012-2013 Year 4 Teaching Studies Unit Handbook (MMU, 2012:16)

This expectation, that categorises student writing in Teaching Studies (that writing should function to reveal a personal discourse or narrative) reflects a wider trend within writing pedagogy more generally. Writing viewed as a conduit for the personal is premised upon particular assumptions about the ways in which the text and the writer are connected that permeate across disciplines and educational settings. This popular model of writing foregrounds 'originality and individuality' (Gilbert 1989:73), as writing is seen to act as a form of self-expression, where the author is able to communicate something of themselves through their text. This communication, between author and reader, is very often regarded as an innocent and straightforward business, in

that as long as the writing task allows for it, the text is seen as functioning as a tool for self-revelation.

Gay et al. (1999) in arguing for a more explicit approach to familiarising students with the required practices central to the demonstration of a personal discourse or narrative, suggest that this intimate and personal connection between the writer and the text is possibly the most taken-for-granted aspect of student teachers' writing in general.

Returning to the example of Yemena, this taken-for-grantedness suggested by Gay et al. (ibid.), may, I believe, account for the somewhat discernible lack of a personal discourse in her writing. It is entirely possible that perhaps as a result of unfamiliarity with 'the personal' as a tool for writing, Yemena fails to construct a personal narrative, because doing so represents a literary challenge which at this point in her studies, and for a variety of reasons, she is unable to surmount. Another possibility is that the expectations of self-revelation and connectedness are simply missed, in that she fails to recognise such aspects as important to the reader. Returning to the work of Lea and Street (1998), where students' perception of success in interpreting and responding to a writing task is likened to working out the rules of a game, we could suggest that Yemena may well have made an 'incorrect move', in that her interpretation of the task saw no great need for a more personal narrative. As Gay et al (ibid.) pragmatically conclude, there are degrees of difference in the levels to which students perceive the need to become personally engaged in writing their assignments. For some it seems it may be automatic, whilst for others, it is viewed as unimportant. Whilst this variation in interpretation is plausible, the difficulty Yemena has in making explicit the original and individual aspects of her work, may be indicative of a more complex issue, one that arises when we require students to locate the personal within a broader narrative of professional progress.

Initially, there seems scope for Yemena to engage personally in the story she is constructing about her practice. This scope derives from the situatedness of Yemena within the story she tells. She is personally involved in the experience

she describes and, what is more, and as is often the case, Yemena chooses to re-tell this story above all others because of some degree of personal investment in the events that took place.

She is worried by the boy's situation and is propelled forwards by the desire of emulation; hoping to recast herself like the class teacher, as an object of agency, rather than submitting to powerlessness. However, ultimately this scope remains unutilised, as Yemena's writing appears to become more remote from herself and rather more embedded in the kinds of strategies that are officially sanctioned within teacher education in England and primary school teaching more specifically. Personalisation, assessments, learning styles and such become Yemena's preferred choice of language for professional development as she attempts to articulate the ways in which she might use her initial experience and the literary research she has undertaken to demonstrate professional progress.

The predicament this student finds herself in is by no means unusual and has been described in much of the literature that exists around student writing and, in particular, student teacher writing (Lea, 1999; Scott, 2000; Stierer, 2000). Essentially, Yemena finds herself caught between two competing discourses – the personal and the professional, or, as in Scott's (2000) analysis, 'competence and performance'. The former categorised similarly to that previously described – a site of in-built creativity, individuality and self-expression; the latter, encapsulating specialised outputs (personalised learning), and explicit rules for realising them (assessments and learning styles). Struggling to describe 'better' in her own 'individual, original' terms, Yemena is either unable to resist the lure of, or feels obliged to adopt a more 'professional' discourse and so aptly inserts herself within it. In doing so she borrows the language of the professional, performance based discourse and as a result re-inscribes herself as a professional making progress in her teaching performance, at the same time however, possibly losing the sense of personal engagement with which her written work begins.

## **Student two: Sarah**

### **Presentation of data**

The construction of a progress narrative at the expense of a personal discourse is also evident, I believe, in the writing of the second student who agreed to participate in the study.

In the extracts that follow Sarah can be seen writing to the same assignment specifications as Yemena. She begins by retelling an incident that occurred during the University's Special Educational Needs (SEN) Week – school-based training that involves students undertaking a two week placement within a SEN setting, working alongside class teachers, often in very specialised units. The student overhears a difficult telephone conversation between the class teacher and a very worried and concerned parent. The parent is at home and is struggling to bathe her son. The distress of the caller is clear to the student and the situation is only resolved when the class teacher offers to go directly to the home of the child and help the parent. The student understands this as being an inevitable consequence of particular inadequacies or failures that have acted as forerunners to the situation.

*.... a recent document published by the DfES [Department for Education and Skills] "Every Parent Matters", ....ensures that every parent or carer should feel confident that the system is providing for their child, in this particular case Child A's mother certainly did not feel confident. This is where the class teacher stepped in, believing that the LEA [Local Education Authority<sup>11</sup>] had failed, and therefore she had to take responsibility for that child. I understand why the teacher reacted in this way; she cares for this child and didn't want any harm to come to him.*

The event troubles Sarah, as she questions whether she would, or in fact should, behave in the same way if a similar situation were to arise where she had the responsibility to act as the class teacher. This leads to a tentative questioning of the professional parameters class teachers work within.

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<sup>11</sup> Please see the glossary for a full explanation of the term **Local Education Authority**.

*Where do we as teachers step in and offer help? It has to be done in a very sensitive way, trying not to offend the parent, but at the same time making it clear that the child needs extra support.*

However, rather than this signalling the beginning of an analytical exploration of the difficulties that arise when teachers attempt to define their roles and responsibilities and the ways in which the student might attempt to negotiate these for herself, the student begins a process of positioning herself as an observer of unsatisfactory professional practices. In doing so, the student is able to demonstrate that, as a consequence of the writing process, some form of betterment has taken place and, as a result, she is enabled to act in professionally more satisfying ways, should the need ever arise.

*In the situation involving Child A and his mother, there really should have been agencies outside of school involved, this shows there was a lack of communication between the school, home and external agencies.*

*Whilst looking at this incident and the way the teacher handled it, I looked at the different QTS [Qualified Teaching Status] standards that would have been achieved whilst it was being solved. The initial standards I felt were the most important were Q32 and Q33. These were looking at working as a team alongside other members of staff, it is important that if I was put in this situation, then I would work collaboratively alongside other members of staff and ensure that they were involved appropriately... I would have asked the mother to come into school and discuss the issues, providing transport for her if necessary, and tried to use the multi-professional agencies before committing myself to anything.*

Sarah seems unable to articulate professional progress in any of the ways that might demonstrate a personal discourse – uniqueness, creativity, connectedness; all appear to be absent. Although as with Yemena's writing, Sarah initially demonstrates something of a personal interest and engagement with the original incident, this dissipates as the progress narrative takes over and gathers momentum through the adoption of a more professional discourse and specifically in this case, the language of the National Training and Development Agency<sup>12</sup> (TDA), as indicated by her reference to the standards for Qualified Teaching Status. As a result, rearticulated words and phrases such as 'collaborative working' and 'multi-professionalism' seem to replace any

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<sup>12</sup> Since the time of Sarah's writing the Training and Development Agency (TDA) has been rebranded as the Teaching Agency (TA). In 2013, the National College for School Leadership merged with the Teaching Agency to become the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

serious or sustained engagement with the complexities evident in the incident first described. It might be argued that Sarah is subsumed by what she understands to be the discourse of professionalism, and rather than negotiate the precarious balance between two apparently 'competing discourses' (Stierer, 2000) she gives up the struggle. Such a writing outcome might also be understood as exemplifying Lea's (1999) 'reformulation approach' as described in Chapter 1. Perhaps in rearticulating particular words and phrases Sarah believes she will be able to demonstrate to her tutor that she has both engaged in the course content and as such developed knowledge and understanding of what teaching is (and importantly in this example, is not) and how her own practice might be improved.

In capturing a sense of forward movement from a state of uncertainty and concern to one of more knowledgeable and effective practitioner the writing offered by both students can, in some way, be seen as an articulation of progress. Within the confines of the assignment word limit, both students demonstrate the ways they have moved forward professionally; acquiring knowledge of new forms of possible action that can be applied to their future work in the classroom. Despite my critical analysis of this approach, there may well be merit in this model and indeed, the writing outcomes it supports and structures. It may be the case that at some point in the future both Sarah and Yemena are able to enact these 'better' ways of working to improved effect. In this way writing as a process can at least be considered as both transformative and effectual; as a tool for professional development.

### **Writing ourselves better?**

At this point it seems prudent to return to the concerns and assumptions from which this closer examination of student writing stemmed. Firstly, that writing can and should be utilised as a tool for learning. Secondly, and as demonstrated by my analysis of Yemena and Sarah's work, the processes by which this learning occurs are not unproblematic and in particular there appears



to be some dissonance between the desire for students to construct a personal discourse and the requirement that students demonstrate professional progress. This is not to say that either one or both of these features of writing are undesirable, but that perhaps in their current form, students may struggle to position themselves, or to indeed understand themselves, as personally invested in the professional progress narratives they construct. However, rather than search for an immediate alternative, which might offer students something 'better' in terms of the type of writing they undertake (and in doing so perhaps offer my own example of a victory narrative) it seems more pertinent to first attempt something of an opening up of the assumptions and regulatory practices that both underpin the types of student teacher writing we have looked at thus far, as well as students' interpretations of what completing such writing tasks might, or should involve.

To this end then, rather than seek to illustrate other ways in which student teacher writing might facilitate progress, we might instead seek to destabilise and disrupt the notion of progress itself and, in particular, the formation of professional development implied in the discursive practices outlined above. It is to this task that I now turn.

### **Re-conceptualising progress**

In her paper on poststructural feminism in education, St. Pierre (2000a) opens-up for scrutiny universally held notions of truth and knowledge in an attempt to expose their 'makedness' or ideological bases. As part of her discussion of these dominant and pervasive ideologies, she challenges the ways in which we have become accustomed to thinking about progress. She does so by describing it as a construct of what she terms an essentially 'humanist project' in the search for knowledge. Humanism, although acknowledged by St. Pierre as 'an amazingly supple philosophy', is also variously described as originating from the point at which man (sic) began to believe that through the exercise of reason, he, as well as god, could produce knowledge and truth. As a result of this turning

point (usually associated with the emergence of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century 'Enlightenment') man (sic) begins to see himself as capable of improving the world and ultimately "get[ting] it right" once and for all' (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000).

As part of her analysis the central Hegelian theory of history and knowledge, which presents progress as a teleological phenomenon (a purposeful development towards an end or satisfactory resolution; Kainz, 1996), is examined.

The implication of this idea is that the present is always better than the past because we are proceeding in a teleological fashion from the contradiction, fragmentation, and confusion of the present toward the harmony and freedom of some basic unity in the future.

(St. Pierre, 2000: 495)

St. Pierre goes on to argue that understanding progress in this way has become so pervasive, so naturalised, that rather than ask questions of it, we accept it as the natural order; a sign that such a notion has moved beyond 'theory', to become almost an integral part of the fabric of being, so inherent it can barely be seen. However, by framing the notion of progress as an essentially humanist project and therefore as a theory of knowledge rather than a 'reality', a lever is provided by which we might attempt to interrupt its taken-for-granted status.

The first stage of such a process then would require 'seeing'. Seeing, necessitates that we presuppose 'progress' or 'development' as theories of knowledge which describe a process of forward momentum from a state of confusion towards a more perfect, unified understanding. As a theory, 'progress' is revealed as a formulation; signifying a process or set of principles that constitute a few amongst many, rather than the only possibilities. This pervasive formulation of progress can be seen in current educational policy and discourses around how both children and adults learn; from the ways in which children's learning is described and tested (Adams, 2008); to the tiered structure of teachers' salaries; to the prescribed content and linearity of the National Curriculum (Stronach et al., 2010). The assumption implicit within

these common practices and policies is of course that as time moves on, provided the correct form of input or actions, we will in some way become 'better'.

Such a conceptualisation of progress might be understood as underpinning the student teacher writing produced in response to the task described above. Indeed, this seems ever more likely when taking into account the current state of the primary education system. Take for instance Stronach et al.'s (2010) view of primary education in England as being 'bedevilled' by policy hysteria. Interestingly, Ball (2008) describes the policy on which this hysteria is based as in and of itself an enlightenment concept;

...about progress... moving from the inadequacies of the present to some future state of perfection where everything works well and works as it should.

(2008:7)

Student teachers are necessarily immersed in this policy hysteria and the conceptualisation of progress on which it is itself based. Becoming teachers in such a world, perhaps it is to be expected that students seek to conjure up better versions of self in their writing (themes taken up and explored further in Chapter 5). Through the creation of this more perfect, textual, future teacher self they are able to demonstrate how they will become, as Yemena describes it, 'a more well-rounded, effective teacher.'

Returning to St. Pierre's presupposition of progress as a single, albeit very powerful, theory of knowledge production, and moving on from the process of attempting to *see* such theories at work, it now becomes possible to search out alternatives for students in terms of how their writing might be used as a tool for learning and more specifically how that learning might be conceptualised against, rather than with the grain of a humanistically bound progress. It seems prudent here to question why such a process of disruption to our perceived norms (in this case, our entrenched understanding of the term progress) might be important, or, in fact, useful. Lather (1991) responds to the basic principle of this question by explaining that any attempts to construct such grand theories tend to dismiss the naturally existing chaos and disorder of the universe. In a

poststructuralist world, there is no recourse to a level of discourse where 'pure' structures, concepts or theories tidy up the everyday nature of complexity and contradiction (Miller et al., 2005). Rather, life is the way that it is because of accidents; unintended convergences in history and arbitrary desires and passions (St. Pierre, 2000). Lather's response, situated as it is within this poststructural paradigm, is useful in that it opens up further the cracks beginning to emerge in the conceptualisation of progress presented earlier. Returning to the work of Yemena and Sarah it seems almost inconceivable that an environment as complex, varied and chaotic as that of the classroom environment and the human interactions that occur within it, might be reduced to 'asking the mother to come and discuss the issues' or 'differentiating three ways' in the name of progress. Professional skills are invariably more difficult to pin down and infinitely more complex as processes to achieve and refine, than the framing of progress in this way often allows students to do justice to.

### **'Progress': the theory and practice nexus**

There is, I believe, a wider concern that the model of student writing above (inclusive of the philosophy that learning is grounded in experience) speaks of. In various guises this 'concern' is one which I find continuously reiterated; in literature, in discussion with colleagues, by various government ministers through policy rhetoric and by the students themselves. Take the following comments from a student who committed to participate more fully in the project via a series of one-to-one interviews.

*Student P: I think there is a big divide between university training and school-based training and I think it's quite hard to make links between the two, particularly when you're in school because obviously it's a pressured environment and you've got to act on the day, whereas university is a nice supportive environment, you discuss things with a group of students and you know, you all agree with each other. Yeah, it's very separate.*

(Interview transcript P/1, 2011: lines 194-199. Please see Appendix A.)

*Student P: ...it's just when you're faced with thirty children and you know in that [different] environment where you are doing your university writing, I think that that gets forgotten about a little bit and you just have to get down to the practicalities of things, so I think that, I think the writing and reflective process takes a back seat, I know it does for me - so little Tommy is misbehaving, you don't think 'er, let me remember what I wrote about behaviour management strategies.'*

(Interview transcript P/1, 2011: lines 180-185. Please see Appendix A.)

I believe what the student gestures towards here is one of the more persistent myths within teacher education programmes that are located predominately within higher education institutions; that theory and practice are distinct and often uncomplimentary companions in the tricky process of learning to teach. According to Britzman (2003), and reflected in the responses of the student above, the fragmentation between the two being most apparent during the shift from learning about teaching in university and teaching in actual classrooms. This fragmentation coagulates in the idea that whilst at university, students might learn 'in theory' how to teach, but will only learn 'how to do it really' in the classroom itself. This propagates a binary logic that positions the university and school as both distant and distinct from one another; accentuating their differences rather than similarities. This way of thinking perpetuates the association that University, preoccupied as it is with academia, is therefore somehow removed from practical concerns. This 'logic' however draws on a very particular understanding of theory and, more generally, academia; one that sees theory as a given and the students job as mapping these so-called theories of learning onto what they see and do in the classroom; essentially recalling and then testing theory out in 'real' time on 'real' people and hence only then 'really learning' the merit of theory in the first place.

Of course, a poststructuralist analysis would immediately highlight the inadequacies of such a simplistic division and remind us that binaries are not only unhelpful, but also oppressive. Lather (1991), (amongst others, including Davies and Gannon, 2005; Stanley and Wise, 1993 and St. Pierre, 2000) for instance, stresses that binaries of this kind are constructions of a humanist and

patriarchal order and as such need to be viewed as a means of privileging one aspect of society/life over that of another. (Examples of which can be seen in a variety of well-established and often oppressive binaries for example good/bad, man/woman, rich/poor.) By over simplifying and categorising constructions as complex as morality, gender, economy and status, members of society can find privilege and power in situating themselves on the dominant side of the binary; where 'normality, rationality and naturalness' (Davies and Gannon, 2005) reside. The fiction of the binary is thus upheld by those wishing to condition their own lives and the lives of others through regulation and systems of categorisation. Applying this analysis to the practice-orientated assignment (I will apply it elsewhere as the thesis continues), we might conclude that such a writing task/model may work to perform a remedial function; drawing the eye away from the polarity implied in the binary and instead towards the common concerns of both institutions in relation to student teachers – to improve and develop the skills of emerging practitioners. This surface level, remedial function then, serves as a bridge between the university and school. They cannot be viewed as separate because one draws on the other, so whilst they may be distinct, they are complementarily so. However, going beyond this notion of 'gap filling', the practice-orientated assignment, grounded in school experience, might also be conceptualised as an opportunity to re-think theory as integral to practice and vice versa. This, rather than providing a corrective measure which might work to draw the two sides of the binary closer together, instead seeks to dissolve the binary completely. Here, the sources of theory are understood to be found in practice and therefore as described by Britzman; theorising transforms from 'an isolated activity separate from the experience of teaching, or as a grand truth one attempts to impose', to a 'lived relationship, grounded in the practical existence of persons' (2003:64). Theory and practice remain different but rather than isolated entities are dependant and coexisting articulations of praxis. Whereas binaries might be described as living a relationship of need, where one category requires the other in a position of submission to prevail, this relationship is mutually constituted – theory and practice are intertwined; inseparable (even if different) and, importantly,

generated within and belonging to the student teacher, rather than bound by the locations of the school or university.

Whilst this is (to me at least) theoretically plausible, the possibility that the student writing model described in this and the previous chapter works in such a way, stumbles uncomfortably alongside the discourse that saturates the kinds of responses exemplified in the data presented. I wonder then, if the possibility is there, what might I do (or not be doing) to nurture it. How might I work to undermine what I see as inherently flawed but popularist discourses that work to define a fictional distinction between theory and practice? What attempts can be made to disrupt an understanding of progress that popularises a vision of learning and development that valorises relentless betterment. Where might I go next?

## Chapter 3: Debunking Writing Myths

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So far I have outlined what I would like to describe as writing 'myths'. Whilst some of these myths are rather context specific, for example that writing as a facet of teacher education in universities should enable the student to bridge the theory/practice divide, others, as previously explained, are more general, for example that learning and progress (and by extension, learning and progress in the form of writing) are linear and cumulative and can be judged by outcomes. I have also drawn attention to the assumption that writing is a kind of window to the soul, or for our purposes here, the professional and sometimes personal 'self'. The choice of the word 'myth' is purposeful. As Barthes asserts (cited in Britzman, 2003), myths serve a contradictory function; they make themselves known to us (for we need to understand them), whilst simultaneously imposing themselves upon us. We are both made aware of myths and forced to live them out. They are a 'language for codifying what a culture values' (Britzman, 2003:30) and once that value has become apparent to us, once it has been acted out, choosing to value something other comes to be regarded as either radical or misguided for its apparent deviation from 'our' cultural norms. In relation to the writing myths outlined above, it is clear to see that both these positions, radical and misguided, are, and for different reasons, states of being that most student teachers would wish to avoid. Drawing an assignment to a close and claiming to know less about, say for example, 'personalisation' than you did before, might perhaps demonstrate the writers philosophical stance on what constitutes 'knowing', but may not, as a demonstration of outcomes, do much to convince that worthwhile learning (applicable to the classroom) has taken place. Take for example my own analysis of the writing of Yemena, presented earlier in Chapter 2. At no point did I speculate that the personal discourse I struggled to see in her writing was a conscious decision on the part of Yemena to choose to value something other than what was dictated. Rather, in the analysis I chose to write, the apparent



lack was interpreted as a case of 'could not' rather than 'would not'. My own writing then reveals that whilst I was capable of imagining that the need for a personal narrative went either unnoticed by the writer or constituted a literary challenge that she was unable to surmount, the idea that its absence revealed an active unwillingness to 'live out the myth', remained unconsidered.

For teacher educators, the situation is a little (but not vastly) different. Whereas for the teacher educator misguidedness is to be avoided at all costs, radicalism has, I believe, a more affectionate reception. The difficulty of course being that both positions are subjective and as such playing at the boundaries between them becomes a perilous business. Explaining and justifying radical ideas is of course the safety harness to which all alternatives must be well strapped, however, however well justified or empirically defended your supposed radicalism might be, the prospect of its interpretation as misguided, will always loom large.

Britzman further elucidates on the properties of the myth. They;

...make available particular discursive practices that position situations as given without the quality of contingency; its form asserts a stable meaning despite unstable context.

(2003: 30)

My aim in this chapter is to offer something of a contingency; to destabilise the stable by considering alternative discursive practices. In doing so, I make no attempt to address each of the myths I have outlined separately. This is purposeful, as I do not understand them as discrete entities that can subsequently be addressed and responded to separately.

Brown and Jones' (2001) work on writing and professional development is a good place to start and offers much by way of realising my aim here. Their work on practitioner research focuses on the use of anecdotes or stories about teaching as a method for, and subject of, enquiry into student teachers' own practice (albeit postgraduate students, studying toward a higher qualification). These stories or remembered events in the classroom are used as a basis for

practitioners to further explore both themselves as professionals as well as their professional situations.

According to Brown and Jones, such stories provide a means of distancing the writer from the situation they describe and as such provide an opportunity for the practitioner to attempt to see themselves and the stories they choose to tell about their practice a little differently. Although similarities can be drawn between this model and that presented in Chapter 2 (both being rooted in experience, or stories about teaching), the Brown and Jones model differs in how such stories are used as a basis for professional development. Rather than provide the writer with a baseline from which the level of learning attained can be measured via comparison against newer, better forms of practice, the stories present an opportunity for the writer to problematise and question facets of self as presented in their text. For example, a student reflecting on the writing she produced whilst working towards a MA in Teaching is able to look back over several stories she has produced and see patterns emerging which subsequently help her 'to gain a better understanding of [herself] as a person as well as a practitioner' (2001: 80).

It might be argued that such a process fails to disrupt humanist notions of progress in any dramatic way, as the writer ultimately claims to have become bettered as a result (Brown and Jones themselves find this troubling), however there are several points of leverage against assuming that as such, the model becomes yet another structure within a 'totalising meta-narrative'.

Lyotard (1984/1979, cited in St. Pierre, 2000), identifies the 'meta-narrative' (also sometimes referred to as 'master narratives', 'metanarratives' or 'grand narratives') as serving the 'transcendental, totalizing justifications of knowledge projects' (St. Pierre, 2000:508). The problem with a meta-narrative is that it;

...purports to be a privileged discourse capable of situating, characterizing, and evaluating all other discourses, but [is] not itself infected by the historicity and contingency that render first order discourses potentially distorted and in need of legitimation.

(Fraser and Nicholson, cited in St. Pierre, 2000:508)

In this case then, the meta-narrative would work to perpetuate rather than destabilise writing myths. However, the task of writing, as presented by Brown and Jones, aims to challenge the writer's sense of professional self; it is not about 'creating improvement' but rather it provides a vehicle through which the writer can begin to understand how and why their professional practice has been shaped. In this way, the process of writing can be seen as framing the concept of progress or learning, a little differently.

As a process, this understanding of self may be viewed as an opportunity to open up, rather than dismiss past events; the writer's task being to understand themselves in relation and as relational to, the social contexts they inhabit (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), rather than as a transitional entity that simply inhabits sets of experiences which can, as a result of the right kind of learning and writing, be replaced 'next time' with a different and hopefully better set. In this way, progress is not conceptualised as a forward trajectory towards a necessarily better future, rather it seems that Brown and Jones offer students the opportunity to locate their writing more within a context of stillness; focusing on uncovering something of the writer themselves that perhaps they were not aware of amidst the hectic and often chaotic school environment. In this way the writer does not need to imagine themselves as a better future practitioner – although it may well be that seeing themselves as such is an eventual consequence of their writing. Ultimately then, this model of writing can be seen as managing to retain elements of the close and well established relationship with learning, without demanding the need for progress to be demonstrated in terms of a purposeful development towards an end. It is worth noting however, that whilst this model may well serve to destabilise some writing myths, it also works to propagate others. Aspects of self accessed by the reader and described and worked on through writing by the author, constitute the basis of this model.

Having established the significance of self in the Brown and Jones model, it seems wise to devote some specific attention to it here. This is particularly necessarily I feel, due to the fact that 'self' in itself, is not an easily definable

concept. As with much of what I have covered so far, self is a contested object (or, indeed, subject) and how one understands it, I believe, to some extent determines what one can or cannot 'do with it'. Early concepts of self, for example Cooley's 'looking glass self' (1902, cited in Day et al., 2005), tended to present self as a generally stable and unified quality. Although temporal in its constitution because, as in the example of Cooley's theory, self is the result of the continual production of defining concepts drawn from one's subjective interpretations of the opinions of others, it remained a singular quality – I have a 'self', which I slowly construct over time. This is a self that may well be further understood through writing. For example, students, and practicing teachers, might look to examine how the self present in their stories of practice, is conditioned by the gaze of others. Indeed, looking to how this self is an effect of socially and more precisely, professionally significant others, seems a logical extension of the Brown and Jones model. Student teachers, as well as those in the early and even more advanced stages of their careers, are constantly subjected to versions of their professional self as seen through the eyes of others; Ofsted<sup>13</sup>, head teachers, mentors, children, parents, lecturers – the list goes on, and examining how these others contribute to the discursive construction of a professional self will, no doubt, be an illuminative process.

More recent social and educational theorists, for example Ball (1972, cited in Day et al., 2005), have advocated a more disparate version of self. Ball, quite specific in his explanation of self, describes it as encompassing both situated and substantive identities. The substantive self, similar to Cooley's concept, remains fairly constant, although again temporally constituted because as a result of life changes and the continual process of making sense of social experiences, the substantive self gradually adjusts its character. The situational self however, is far more malleable and responsive to specific social situations, for example, the mother self, the professional self, the emotional self, the shoe shopping/consumerist self. These selves are outwardly and recognisably different, as the subject, both subconsciously and consciously presents or

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<sup>13</sup> Please see the glossary for a full explanation of the term **Ofsted**.

represses aspects of their identity to reflect the social demands (or perceived demands) of a given context. These are also continually reshaped, as external stimuli challenge and reconstruct their characteristic qualities. This concept of self (or selves) is one that is often taken up by students I work with and is often recognised as being of use in both understanding how a sense of self is constructed, but also in beginning to understand more of the selves that they are. It also offers a means by which self as a concept can be understood as theoretically complex, whilst remaining highly accessible.

In offering an alternative model of writing, where students work to develop an awareness and understanding of the complexity of self as lived out in classroom experience, Brown and Jones allow for a shift in thinking in terms of how progress and therefore professional development might be conceptualised. It is worth noting however, that in the current context of Initial Teacher Education in Higher Education Institutions, where much of what students achieve is required to be judged against specified sets of standards, such a model may well present challenges. This challenge often manifests itself in the form of a tension. As Gale reminds us, even if and whilst teacher educators work to develop practices that encourage recognition of, and inquiry into, the complexity of the act of teaching, they do so with an acute awareness of;

...the need to satisfy the policy demands that require adherence to clearly defined models of practice, standards of achievement and systems of inspection.

(2007: 472)

This tension means that decisions regarding the content of taught units (and ultimately, the assessed items for those units) need, for those responsible for their creation and implementation, to be justified as both of value at an intellectual and philosophical level but also to be of relevance at a policy level. This latter process can often seem arbitrary in its execution (any system that 'require[s] adherence' runs this risk) where activities undertaken are assigned associated 'standards of achievement' from the list of competencies against which student teachers are judged. Standards may seem tightly specified,

however much of the language used to construct 'policy demands' such as these, does allow for practitioners to work to their discursive limits. For instance, competencies that require student teachers to, for example, reflect systematically on their approach to teaching (a competence listed under Standard 4 of the 2011 incarnation of the 'Teachers' Standards'<sup>14</sup>; DfE, 2011) are open to, and indeed necessitate, interpretation. What Brown and Jones offer in their model for writing, might well be described quite aptly as 'systematic reflection'.

Whilst it can be argued therefore, that even under the present system of regulation, such an approach as described by Brown and Jones can be justified, it is also worth noting that part of its appeal might well be in its oppositional nature to the kinds of dominant discourses that lists of competences like those described above are often seen to uphold. What Ball (2003) refers to as the culture of performativity<sup>15</sup>, has variously been judged as both pervasive in its saturation of the education sector, as well as being non-conducive to a workforce confident in itself and its abilities. Coining the term 'biographical attitude' to describe a more generalised concern with the teacher-as-a-person, MacLure (1993) describes how approaches as diverse as autobiography, narrative and anecdote are used within teacher education as an oppositional force or, if you will, a practice of resistance to the technologies imposed upon and taking hold of education at all levels, from the reception class, to the university lecture theatre. The appeal here lies in the creation of an alternative story about what it means to be and become a teacher. The voices of the individual in this process give rise to a view of teaching and educating teachers that resists the simplistic, the generalisable and the easily measured, in favour of a more nuanced approach that values the voices of its workforce, rather than seeking to speak for them. The argument here then, rather than one of compliance, suggests that the scope for defending the place of self in teacher education might well be found in activism – possibly a form of justified and

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<sup>14</sup> Please see the glossary for a full explanation of the term **Teachers' Standards**.

<sup>15</sup> Ball's 'culture of performativity' encapsulates the various policy technologies that are deployed as a means of calling into being 'the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement' (2003:216).

operationalised radicalism of the type suggested in the opening paragraphs of this chapter.

However, it can also be suggested that the model presented here – one which argues for, however justifiably, the centrality of the self, might well struggle to sell itself as the sought after nexus between theory and practice. If writing explicitly about how we might 'improve' or develop teaching practices fills the void, then what might a model that leaves more to chance, where improvements to practice remain shadows in the ether of self-examination, have to offer as a viable alternative. If we take, as Britzman (2003) does, a view of theory that posits it as grounded in practice and the lived experiences of persons, then we have at least a starting point. It strikes me however, that the nub of the problem here relates to how theorising about 'self', even if this self is a practicably, contextual self, makes any 'measureable, quantifiable' difference or improvement to the self that appears and acts in the classroom. If it does not, or at least we cannot prove that it does, then what is its worth? My response to this lies in how we understand and articulate the self and how this self might be central to the act of becoming a teacher.

This is a theory of putting self to work, that might most usefully draw on poststructuralist paradigms to illustrate its capabilities. If that sounds somewhat convoluted, then I ask you to bear with me. The self of poststructuralism moves beyond the notion of a duality of self (one essential, stable self and one more malleable and relational), positioning, or possibly more accurately, de-positioning self as 'a site of disarray and conflict' (Weedon, 1987, cited in Lather, 1991: 118). This, somewhat tumultuous expression of self, gestures towards a self that is understood as de-essentialised or being without a stable and unified core. This is a fragmented self and is best understood as existing through a web of multiple and complex representations such as gender, class, ethnicity, profession, sexual orientation and so on. The web metaphor I feel is particularly useful here.

Imagine a collection of several spiders' webs of various sizes, strengths and states of repair. Each held up by its own network of structures, some of which

happen to be other webs, some bits of old fences, others stable walls. The webs are, as Griffiths explains 'intricate, tangled and interlaced, with each part connected to other parts' (1995:2). Then imagine these webs on a dewy morning, each web collecting a number of dew drops, themselves of different sizes and shapes. These dew drops are all dew, but can neither be contemplated as a whole (for if they were, they would no longer be dew), nor can they remain fixed (although, they may appear so when observed at a distance or with scant attention).

These dewy-poststructuralist-self-drops<sup>16</sup> do much to aid my visualisation of a disarrayed self. However, they do not yet capture the self as a site of conflict. Whilst I can both appreciate and find comfort in the chaos of a self that lacks stability (it gives me hope) I wonder, possibly to the point of concern, about the characterisation of self in constant struggle. However, it is for this, that I find the poststructuralist self the most suitable in defining and justifying a place for self in the professional development of teachers. On the surface, conflict or 'constant struggle' (Lather, 1991) would seem to describe a state of being which one might wish to actively avoid, rather than optionally engage in. However, if one's identity continually shifts and as a consequence reforms, this does not strike me as a process one should leave to chance – reformation may well need to be fought for, but surely this is a worthy endeavour? There are two things to note here; the first of which addresses the process by which these shifts occur.

Lather explains that subjectivity is 'socially produced in language, at conscious and unconscious levels' (1991: 118). Here, language is understood as discourse and as such embodying and diffusing power, which implicates the subject in a network of complex relations. This self is therefore fundamentally relational as it absorbs a constant 'bombardment [of] conflicting messages' (ibid.:118). In the viscous consistency of discourse, the self can only really remain in a state of constant renewal, as the messages take their affect. The second point to consider is how is intervention in such a process possible and to what extent

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<sup>16</sup> Just in case I haven't made it clear – the dew represents self.



this might constitute a struggle? Responding to this question requires that I understand how the construction of self, rather than being something which is done to us (it is socially produced) is instead seen as a process by which we are actively involved. Whilst the poststructuralist view of agency maintains a presumption that we are incapable of escaping the discursive construction and regulation of the self, it does allow for active participation within these confines. This means that whilst we may not be able to escape our production through language and discourse, we can at least recognise it as happening and attempt to exert some influence over it. I enjoy Weedon's (cited in Lather, 1991:118) succinct summary of this state of affairs as a process in which we are 'active, but not sovereign'. This activity can manifest itself in various ways and in several stages, from 'the capacity to recognise [our] construction as historically specific and socially regulated' (Davies and Gannon, 2005: 318) and therefore able to call it into question, to choosing from available discourse and cultural practices – taking up those that one finds more appealing (St. Pierre, 2000).

From here then, we can begin to see how a poststructuralist view of self might constitute a response to concerns that the centrality of self in teacher education needs to be justified by more than a claim that an articulation and understanding of self aids the teacher in the classroom. Whilst these are, to my mind at least, fundamental to the process of becoming a teacher (I can't imagine for one minute that advocating teachers with a limited sense/understanding of self would be central to anyone's argument of what might be regarded as the makings of a 'good' teacher), what poststructuralism offers in its concept of self, almost seems to negate the idea of the centrality of self as an indulgence; it is rather, a necessity. How else would one be enabled to actively construct a teacher self, without having the opportunity to firstly, articulate one's sense of who they are, secondly to begin to question how this this sense is arrived at (constructed) and thirdly be active in its reconstruction – who would want to be passive?

Returning to writing then, there is a palpable shift in mind-set and models here – from 'writing ourselves better', to '*writing ourselves.*' If one looks like stopping

short of the other (if you are going to write yourself, why not write yourself better?) then I believe I have failed in my justification of how reconceptualising progress and repositioning self, can take us in a different direction whilst still upholding the promise of student writing as a tool for learning and more specifically professional and personal development. If however, I have been successful in my aim (and I proceed on the basis that I have), then it seems prudent to put more meat on the bones and consider what form such writing might take. To do so, I return to the writing of Yemena (data from Chapter 2).

Whilst I do not wish to attempt to rewrite Yemena's narrative, I do wonder how she might have used such an approach to *'write herself'*. For example, it seems that, and not just for Yemena but more generally, teachers are often described (and then ultimately describe and possibly understand themselves) as saviours for those who have been ill-treated by others. In the writing that Yemena presents for assessment this is achieved through a process of stabilising complex realities; transforming the difficult to deal with and understand (*'During my first year placement ..... I taught a nursery class in which there was a three year old boy, his mother had a drug addiction and worked as a prostitute'*) into recipes for action. There are several discourses at work here that might be understood as shaping the description of Yemena's saviour-self and if drawn out and examined, may be called into question or taken up as, in and of themselves, acts of agency. Britzman (2003) for example, in offering an exposition of the discourse of excessive accountability, describes how it often manifests itself in the cultural myth of 'everything depends on the teacher'. The effect of this myth on the teacher or the student teacher sees them, rather than actively questioning or challenging the validity and authority of systems, investing their time and efforts in 'making up' for what is lost or missing elsewhere – an exhausting endeavour. Another possible example of discourses at work is offered by O'Conner (2008) who draws our attention to the significance of emotions in the process of becoming a teacher. O'Conner recognises the centrality of emotions and a sense of care towards pupils in teachers' endeavours. In doing so, she argues for an explicit and sustained

dialogue of emotionality – privileging rather than suppressing its presence. An interesting, if possibly controversial polemic, and one which seems directly applicable to the stories told by students such as those detailed here as they might be described as working to actively suppress, rather than engage with, an emotional response. These are mere examples, the significant point is that in the process of disputing, identifying with, taking up or internalising these messages of teacher self, Yemena may well have provided an extensive and alternative narrative within which she might ponder the teacher she is becoming; in doing so, agency can be realised.

### **The final myth**

In the opening sections of this chapter I drew attention to several 'writing myths' that I believe work to legitimise particular writing practices within teacher education and, by extension, delegitimise others. One of these myths in particular remains ubiquitous in the alternatives discussed so far; that writing might serve as a transparent window to the writers' thoughts, voice, self and sometimes soul. This myth is particularly difficult for me to deal with, as it has constituted the philosophical backbone of much of my scholarly activity since entering higher education; first as a student teacher, and continuing now, as a teacher educator. It has become most natural for me to 'bare my soul' in writing and to assume that you, as the reader, will take my words as representative of me; allowing you direct access to my thoughts, voice and self. I am doing it now, but here is another reminder...

*So here it is; the moment of reckoning. I wonder if other writers write in this way. Not just months, but years of preparation leading up, I feel, to this. Sitting here at a prepared desk, in a prepared room (decorated especially for the auspicious occasion of writing my thesis) hoping that the work I have done, the time spent, the people relied on, the family neglected will all, over the space of these pages, become worthwhile.*

*(Opening to paragraph one, Chapter 1)*

This practice has become so ingrained in my writing style I struggle to remember a time when, in my own work, the use of the first person pronoun

was frowned upon. Vague recollections of impersonal college assignments linger, but are hazy.

There are many assumptions that underlie this approach to writing, where a 'personal discourse' is foregrounded and an individual with authorial voice is assumed to be found within the writing they produce. Within such a framework, certain aspects of writing as a process are taken for granted, for example transparency, whilst others, for example the production of text, are obscured. I found Gilbert's (1989) work helpful in revealing how this particular myth is constructed. Drawing on her research on students' writing in Further Education, Gilbert draws our attention to the 'popular image of the text' as one which allows the reader direct access to the writer's voice – through the production of writing for others, the author can be heard. This is a tempting prospect, for both readers and writers. For the reader, and this is particularly pertinent for those readers of teacher education assignments, the writing allows for a judgement to be made about the writer – not just the writing. Progress is measured not against a written fiction, but a bodied, physical professional; the theory/practice nexus par excellence. For the writer the opportunity to be heard is liberating. Writing functions as a soapbox, an opportunity to 'have a say'; an opportunity that can often feel otherwise denied in teacher training contexts. In this way, the text becomes both meaningful and worthy – 'the text is no longer a lifeless string of words. The text is real.' (Gilbert, 1989: 28)

However, Gilbert's research casts doubt on whether it is desirable, or even possible, to expect students' writing to function in this way. Rather than a revelation of the author themselves, she proposes that it is more likely that the text merely reveals that which has been constructed by exposure to numerous other texts and continues to be constructed through the written piece itself. The text is real, only inasmuch as it is a text of other texts. In laying bare and questioning the assumption that writing can be personal, we can instead choose to highlight the multi-dimensional, layered and borrowed productive nature of writing. In such a way, our focus shifts again; from 'writing ourselves better', 'to writing ourselves', to '*writing our writing*'.

So what might a model of writing that emphasises the very production of that writing look like? MacLure (2003), whilst not specifically concerned with the writing of student teachers, offers some interesting approaches.

Drawing on Derridean notions of textuality, MacLure speculates on what difference it would make if an attempt is made to acknowledge what she terms the 'written-ness' of one's text. This written-ness is an inevitable product of a process by which text is constructed to achieve particular effects. According to MacLure this process is never an innocent one, although good texts may be able to persuade the reader of their seeming transparency, ultimately the text is a rhetorical device, imbued with intent; it does not and cannot capture or reveal truth. Whether there is a truth to capture is of course a matter for debate, however what is interesting for our purposes here is the idea of acknowledging the written-ness of one's writing and how such an approach might be utilised in developing an alternative approach to student teacher writing. MacLure suggests ways in which this opening up of text might be approached. Asking questions of a text is proposed as a good starting point and although in MacLure's research, this strategy is employed to open up the texts of others, questions such as 'How are subjects drawn in this text? Who gets agency? Whose 'voices' are privileged in this text? Who is silenced?' (2003: 82) certainly have the potential to encourage students to begin to view the purpose and possibilities inherent in the writing process a little differently.

In relation to the writing produced by the two students Yemena and Sarah discussed above, and indeed, student writing more generally, this approach offers tools that the students might use in order to interrogate the 'written-ness' of the stories they tell about themselves and, perhaps equally importantly, the stories they tell about others. (This is a markedly different approach to interrogating themselves.) In the chaotic, hectic environment of the classroom, we all too quickly piece together stories (text) about the people and things that surround us and our own actions in relation to them in order to momentarily make sense of that which we experience. Letting these stories 'speak for themselves' underestimates the level to which discursive practices are shaped

by discourse. Returning to the work of Sarah in particular, it is interesting to note how this approach might have been used by the writer to peel away the layers of production in the original story she relates concerning the observed practice of others both within, and related to, the Special Educational Needs unit in which she is training. In particular the slippage into polarising subjects, their actions and subsequent outcomes is palpable. Those caught up within the text but unable to exert influence over its telling are variously depicted and positioned within a succession of binaries for example; right/wrong, useful/useless, failure/success. The Local Education Authority in particular is clearly positioned;

*This is where the class teacher stepped in, believing that the LEA [Local Education Authority] had failed, and therefore she had to take responsibility for that child.*

As is Sarah's bettered self, which she introduces towards the end of the text;

*...it is important that if I was put in this situation, then I would work collaboratively alongside other members of staff and ensure that they were involved appropriately ...*

*...I would have asked the mother to come into school and discuss the issues.*

Noticing these traits of production and beginning to ask questions of how and why subjects within her text are drawn in this way, might well have led to a progress of sorts; if not that of the traditional 'betterment' kind. This may well be achieved because the process allows for a sideways step, away from commenting on practices in ways that define them (a habitual practice in the model of writing described in the earlier sections of this paper) and instead refocuses attention on the 'reading' of experience and the ways in which it relates to ourselves as 'socially situated spectators' (Lather 1991:145). There are traces here of another enabling act; in drawing our attention to our inclination to assign essential meanings and attempting to elucidate the processes by which this occurs, we can by extension, begin to attend to the partiality of our readings. Revealing and revelling in the ambiguity and multiple meanings of the text creates the space to think the yet unthought of the classroom life, professional skills and human interactions the text describe.

Drawing attention to the writing myths that have so pervaded both my own academic endeavours and those of the students I teach, has allowed the opportunity to speculate on possible alternatives. However, more than that I have tried to provide, in Britzman's (2003) terms, a contingency. With these contingencies to established cultural practices in mind, I now have a decision to make concerning what course the remainder of this research might take. There is, I believe here, an obvious choice. It strikes me that to attempt to apply some of the alternative models I have discussed in this chapter to my own practice in developing and supporting students' writing would seem the most logical step. Indeed, my plan had been just that, and to varying degrees I have followed this through. However, attempting to remodel assessed writing is a process bedevilled by constraints. Changes to assessed items are subject to intense institutional procedures, regulations and scrutiny. This is due largely to the size of the programmes within which I work. Whilst I teach relatively small groups of students (approximately 30), these students are members of a much larger cohort of approximately 250. This means that alterations to assessed items have to be agreed via a lengthy and protracted system of modification at unit level (and so across the cohort) so that the required elements for assessed items are the same for all students. These types of modifications are what I might describe as 'hard change'. They involve the rewriting of unit specifications and the agreement of various committees and boards. My approach to remodelling student writing did not happen at this level. Rather, I opted for what I might describe as 'soft change'. This required a more subtle form of adaptation, with the focus more keenly on pedagogy than systems. I altered my own working practices. Sometimes this was overt; for example, planning activities for the students that encouraged them to see the possibilities inherent in the process of writing differently. Sometimes, the changes were merely whispers: my on-going research has impacted on the way I think about writing and this infects my practice, often without deliberate intent. I will discuss these instances of soft change at length in Part 2.

At the same time as I worked to make use of the kind of research efforts that this and the preceding chapters have attempted to describe, I was introduced to, and quickly seduced by, a set of theoretical/philosophical ideas that seemed to both resonate with and explain (albeit in a very different language) the concerns, quandaries and practical intent that my research had thus far gestured towards. This experience gave rise to a period of adjustment as I was forced to rethink what my research might and could be about. In many ways my research stalled, as I desperately tried to grapple with a new presence in my life as researcher. Counter-intuitively, this stalling was also accompanied by a period of insight and fervent thinking, reading and writing, as I attempted to make use of my new found research friends. The next chapter is devoted to introducing these and explaining the somewhat altered trajectory of my thesis.

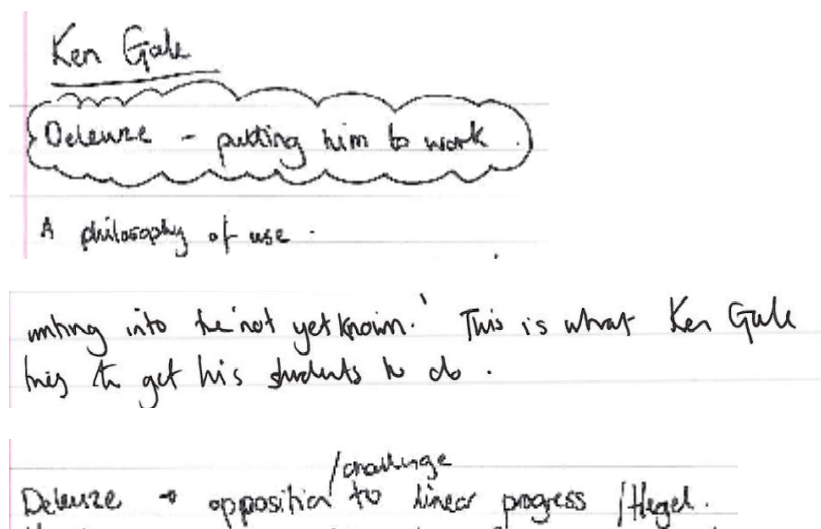


## Chapter 4: Discovering Deleuze

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Approximately two years into my research I happened to attend a 'putting theorists to work' presentation at Manchester Metropolitan's Summer Institute in Qualitative Research<sup>17</sup>. The theorist was Deleuze; the presenter Ken Gale. At the time Deleuze had barely registered on my research radar, this, despite the fact that a number of writers and researchers which had had great influence over me in the preceding years (St. Pierre, MacLure, Lather, Pillow) draw on his work often. For whatever reason, their theoretical investment in the work of Deleuze had, before this time, escaped my attention (only seeming significant or relevant in later re-readings). I cannot remember now why I chose to attend the Deleuze workshop, but I was far from the only one who demonstrated an interest – the presentation, initially billed as a workshop, needed to be relocated; the number of attendees struggling to squeeze into the average capacity room it had originally been allocated.

Sitting through the presentation/workshop, jotter pad in hand, I fervently scribbled down notes. Here a few snippets:



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<sup>17</sup> Hosted by the Education and Social Research Institute (ESRI) at Manchester Metropolitan University

The resonances with my own work thus far were obvious. Additionally, the claim that the work of Deleuze might constitute a 'philosophy of use' suggested the possibility of actualising 'theory as practice' (see Chapter 3), a polemic I had worked hard to develop and apply to my emerging research. I left the Summer Institute happy. Clearly I had found a theoretical companion. My Deleuzian journey was about to begin.

The claim that Deleuzian philosophy is one that can be put to work and be made useful will be examined more fully in further chapters of the thesis, both explicitly, but also implicitly, as I hope that the following chapters will exemplify this 'useful' quality. The current chapter serves a different function. The work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2004) offers several 'figures' or characters through which their philosophy or theory is explained and examined. Whilst I have attempted to make 'use' of these figures in various stages of my research, my main aim here is to explain the process by which I came to know and understand them and to communicate something of their qualities. The figures have presented me with real challenges, not least in my attempts to get to grips with their often very complex and interdisciplinary articulation in 'A Thousand Plateaus' (1987/2004). I have worked with the challenge of developing a relationship with the figures which I liken to 'critical friends', where the figures act to both support the development of new practices in my own work (often through challenge and a process of rethinking/imagining) as well as to guide my subsequent analysis of these. However, as in any friendship, support and criticality are usually preceded by a process of familiarisation; the task to which the majority of this chapter is devoted. Throughout, and with slightly more dedication towards the conclusion of the chapter, I do outline the potential impact of their application to my research but only in the broadest sense, precise details unfold in the remainder of the thesis.

## **Introducing the Nomad and the Rhizome**

### **The Rhizome**

Understanding the figure of the rhizome took some time, particularly what characteristics it might possess that would prove useful to a teacher educator re-evaluating the writing practices of herself and her students; after all, rhizomes, generally speaking, belong to the world of botany or horticulture; the natural, rather than the social sciences. Essentially rhizomes are root-like<sup>18</sup> botanical masses; they are noded and knobbly in appearance. To look at they appear unorganised and chaotic; their growth pattern seemingly has no logical order. They grow, not from one place or point, but from many; any point of the rhizome can therefore connect to any other – as in the image below.



Figure 1: Fresh Ginger (Joyful Belly, 2012)

This chaotic and disorderly nature can be realised if you consider for a moment the experience of attempting to peel fresh ginger (itself a rhizome). Whilst its eventual warming properties and health benefits may well make up for the difficulty in preparation, the peeling – this way and that, forwards and backwards, under and over, soon reveals how stubbornly the rhizome defies direction and order. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2004:23) the rhizome 'has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and overflows.'

Contrasting the nature of the rhizome to that of a tree, where direction is easily identifiable, enables us to further appreciate the growth pattern of the rhizome. May (2005) describes the more orderly system of derivation that constitutes the botanical arrangement of trees as follows:

A tree has particular roots that embed themselves in the soil at a particular place and give rise to branches in a particular way... first the roots, then the trunk, then the leaves. The roots are embedded here and not elsewhere. The branches are bound to the trunk, the leaves to the branches.

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<sup>18</sup> The rhizome is 'root-like' but not 'a root'; the importance of the distinction will become clear later.

It is against this comparison (the rhizome in contrast to the tree) that Deleuze and Guattari ask us to consider the rhizome as a way of (un)ordering thought (one of the many ways botanical characteristics are used to expose and decentre epistemological assumptions and rethink logic). Believing that Western thought has for too long nurtured a relationship to the logic of trees, the rhizome is used to present an alternative model. This alternative requires both a philosophical and theoretical shift. This shift, according to Colman (2005), is indicative of Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy as a whole. It requires a move away from our habitual practice of thinking like the root-tree. With its unidirectional roots, the tree represents the transcendental model of thought; the preserve of rational and enlightenment systems of thinking. This is a way of thinking that has ensured that the world and our experiencing of 'reality' have been encountered, understood and written about as an ordered system or series of structured wholes from which semiotic connections, taxonomies and typologies can be compiled (Colman, 2005). This recognition of the world has been pervasive. It has filtered the ways in which we have seen and experienced life. Our conception of reality is formed from and is of its making. Deleuze and Guattari define this as a world of representation or, more accurately, re-presentation – presenting the same world over and over again (Stagoll, 2005) because in stifling or limiting the nature of thought, the potential and possibility for something other to occur is similarly stifled and limited. In this world, variety and change are constrained to the extent that difference can only be experienced against the concept of sameness: 'difference-from-the-same' (ibid.) which, not surprisingly, is not that different at all. In Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical critique of thought there is therefore, a lot at stake – the way we experience the world.

The rhizome offers an alternative conception as it has, in its makeup, the potential for presentation anew (rather than re-presentation). This is because, in its construction it challenges habitual, structured and hierarchal thought. It exists in a state of perpetual creation. It constitutes an operation of things –

movements, intensities and polymorphous formations (Colman, 2005). There is no structure or order to it but a series of complex, intertwined, overlapping and continually transforming 'random associations and connections...' and 'abstract relations between components' (Colman, 2005:232).

It seems prudent here to ask what significance, if any, this may have for writing a doctoral thesis about students' writing. In part, the response is simple in that if we choose to think and write with the rhizome, we need to willingly accept and enter into a state of becoming that has no stability, structure or hierarchical system of organisation – this is essential if we are to avoid re-presentation. One of the ways in which this is achieved is through the refusal and subversion of an end point and the acceptance instead that there will be no culmination arrived at from systematicity and order. Reaching a conclusion is not and should not be regarded as the purpose of human endeavour. Rather, it is 'between-things' where we will find existence presented anew. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari:

Where are you going? Where are you coming from? Where are you heading for? These are totally useless questions... *Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way, a stream without beginning or end...

(1987/2004:25)

This is, of course, of consequence for any research project and so it will be for this one. If I am willing to work with and not against rhizomatic relational energy, then the delineation of a conclusive set of answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this project is not where this thesis is heading. It is important to note however, and resonating with elements of the discussion in the previous chapter, that in accepting and even purposefully orchestrating an open system of thought, agency is by no means lost. Whilst, as Gale (2007) notes, it may be the case that Deleuze and Guattari's critique of arborescence represents a challenge to the established and orthodox relationship between structure and agency, it is by no means a given that agency suffers as a result. Indeed, new opportunities are presented; relational energies have the capacity

and malleability to be configured. In research and thesis writing, this is important. Some sort of 'configuration' is expected and in configuration, agency can be realised. As shoots and tubers of the rhizome ceaselessly connect to other bodies and things, the original changes its shape/nature; it takes on new dimensions. There is, therefore, transformation and movement, and these are, or at least can be, the result of the actions of an agent. The rhizome of the natural sciences, left to its own devices, grows of its own accord. The rhizome of the social sciences, suffers constant interference. It is in this interference where the agency of the researcher/writer is realised. Agency can be, and is, found in making connections and the 'constant modifications' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) these engender. As Colman (2005) notes, Deleuze and Guattari's key mechanism for describing affective change *is* the rhizome because 'to be rhizomorphous is to produce stems and filaments... [and] put them to strange new uses' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/2004:17).

Finally on rhizomatic thought; likening the rhizome to a map<sup>19</sup> Deleuze and Guattari offer both a note of caution and a possible method by which the perils and temptations of dependence on orthodox ways of thinking might be circumvented. It is easy to read Deleuzian figures as heroes and in doing so create oppositional villains with whom they can do battle. It is a comfortable mode of thinking: rhizome-good, trees-bad. Thankfully for us however, Deleuze and Guattari offer us some 'avoidance strategies'. If the rhizome is understood as a map (rather than a tracing, which is likened to the root-tree) and we use each figuration to further understand the other, then we might in the process avoid the types of simplistic dualisms that ordinarily work to hold bodies, minds and matter in their place. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this is simply a question of method; of putting the tracing back onto the map. The tracing is stable, its trajectory linear. The map in contrast, and like the rhizome, is always in a state of becoming (see below for further discussion on 'becoming'). If the tracing is laid over the map, then the tracing becomes part of the process by which we might construct new knowledge, as we look for contrasts and

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<sup>19</sup> In 'A Thousand Plateaus', Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome as both similar to and in, and of itself, a map. Maps can be parts of a rhizome, or the rhizome itself.

ruptures between the two in order to learn something new or differently. In this way the tracing is not discarded but becomes central to enabling us to think the not yet thought. Cartesian dualisms are avoided.

## **The Nomad**

The figure of the rhizome is inextricably linked to the second figure I introduce here; the nomad. For the researcher, the nomad is particularly significant because, as the nomad is essentially a traveller, there is the advantage of thinking and moving alongside her, or indeed, becoming her (as suggested in my thesis title). The relationship between the rhizome and the nomad is, as is much Deleuzo-Guattarian theory, complex. However in its simplest form it can be thought of as thus: the researcher (or teacher, or student teachers) are;

...nomads searching and inquiring in spaces both outside and within the traditional 'fields' of research. The complex shoots, branches and chains of the rhizome become 'mobile arrangements of space where thought can settle for a time then multiply and recombine, always displacing the sedentary and unified' [St. Pierre, 1997:412].

(Gale, 2007:478)

In other words, the nomads 'searching and inquiring' constitutes its travel and the rhizome the 'mobile arrangement of space' through which she moves. Although I have used the verb travel here, it should be noted that the 'journeying' this refers to is of a particular kind and, as a result, the nomad remains distinguishable from other types of traveller; the immigrant, for example. This is because their travel lacks a single and ultimate destination. The nomad is engaged in an indeterminable journey, in that she moves from one space/place to another without the goal of long term settlement or a final destination (as befitting moving through rhizomatic arrangements of space). Whilst it would seem commonsensical therefore to define the nomad by her movement, Deleuze and Guattari warn against such a characterisation. There are two main reasons for this, firstly, and most basically, because as a thought

process, common sense is not highly regarded (it being 'the state'<sup>20</sup> consensus raised to the absolute' 1987/2004:413) and secondly, because the nomad does not particularly want to move anywhere. Rather than compelled to travel as a result of a deep seated desire to 'move-on', we are urged to understand nomadism as a response. To understand nomadism as such, it is first necessary to say something of the kinds of spaces the nomad might move through.

Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between two types of space; those that are smooth and those that are striated. Striated space is that which has been 'carefully and conscientiously timed and placed'. It is 'coded, defined, bound and limited' (St. Pierre 2000:263). Deleuze and Guattari liken this space to the game of chess; the board representing space, the chess pieces its inhabitants. The 'chess pieces are coded; they have an internal nature and intrinsic qualities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987/2004:389): they are pre-inscribed. Their pre-inscription lies in their relationship to, or even interconnectedness with, the space they inhabit and severely limits their agency. They are chess pieces because they possess intrinsic qualities that make them so. However, such properties are rendered obsolete without a chequered board. Together these relational qualities ensure that movement is constrained – what they are (chess pieces in relation to the chess board) determines what they can do and importantly where they can go. The board of chess is therefore a heavily striated, closed space. It only allows travel in certain directions; speed of travel and destination are also constrained. The board activates the constrained nature of the pieces which inhabit it.

The game of 'Go' on the other hand is used to exemplify smooth space; the pieces here are nomadic. The Go board is an open space (albeit not an empty one; it is fashioned as a grid). The game is essentially about claiming territory. The aim is to surround vacant areas of the board and then attempt to hold on to that space, fending off the advances of the opposing player in their attempts to take that space as their own. Unlike chess pieces, Go pieces have no intrinsic

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<sup>20</sup> In Deleuzian terms, the state is sovereignty. It reigns over what it is capable of internalising. Its goal is to reproduce itself.

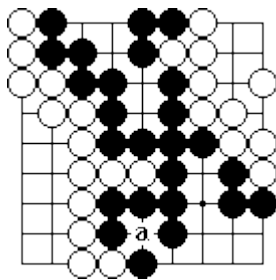


properties and therefore are able to move where they want – they are not limited by pre-existing codes. Whereas the chess pieces exist in relation to the chess board;

...a Go piece only has a milieu of exteriority, or extrinsic relations with nebulas or constellations, according to which it fulfils functions of insertion or situation.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1987/2004: 389)

To understand this further, it is helpful to extend the explanation of the Deleuzo-Guattarian term 'exteriority' beyond the rather concise 'extrinsic relations with nebulas or constellations' provided in the quotation above. Roffe (2005) describes exteriority via comparison against its opposing constituent, interiority. Interiority designates a state of being where existence is conceived of as independent of the world. Bodies, matter, action, thought etc. are understood as having no necessary connection to other bodies, matter and so on. They transcend the external world around them. Exteriority on the other hand, infers the opposite. The subject is 'a set of pre-subjective parts which are held together by a network of relations' (2005:95) and, as this is the case, we need to look externally to the relations between things (rather than internally or within things) to understand anything of their nature. Put simply, and returning to the game of Go, Go pieces only work in relation to other Go pieces and the forms and patterns they create on the board. For example:



(British Go Association, 2014)

Go pieces are characterised by their relationship to the world outside of themselves. This also ensures that the relations by which the Go piece is constituted are fluid and transient (neither constellations nor nebula have fixed constitutive elements). The relations are multilateral so fixedness of purpose,

intention, character and so on, is impossible. It is according to these shifting and changeable relations that the Go piece fulfils its functionality.

Returning to understanding nomadism as a response, the nomad needs to be thought of in relation to the two variations of space described above. Striated space has in effect been territorialised because it is under the control of and pre-ordered by the state. This means that within this space, movement is always restricted; paths are already carved out and following them is made easy. These paths exist in various ways, from the way thinking is ordered by 'logic', to the nuclear family, and the organisation of faith in religion. The nomad cannot exist within such space because the nomad and smooth space are mutually constitutive; one cannot exist without the other, they are central to each other's reification in the world. As a result nomads work to deterritorialise striated space, to smooth it out, but the deterritorialisation is a response, not an innate compulsion.

In the process of becoming a practice-based nomadic researcher then, the deterritorialisation of striated spaces becomes a major occupation. Gale, for example, encourages the nomadic researcher to engage in a deterritorialisation of 'textual, theoretical and practice-based space' (2007:478). However, there is clearly more to this process than reinventing spaces and this is because the landscape and the traveller are dependent on one another for their qualities. The nature of this relationship is always different, as is how it is configured but its presence is always felt. It is for this reason that I believe that any effort to put to work or use Deleuzian philosophy, must consider the researcher's identity as central. This point is made explicitly by Cole (2013) in his re-evaluation of data compiled for a government funded research project in Australia. After the completion of the funded project, Cole returns to his data (interview transcripts and field notes) with the intention of experimenting with how else it might perform using a different set of analytical tools. In doing so he applies 'nomad science' and discovers that it involves;

...becoming, unstable identities, the questionable middle ground between participants and researchers (see Braidotti 2000), being lost and in-between research aims, methodology and executing the write up (e.g. McCoy 2010).

(Cole, 2005:224)

Why it does, can be explained by attending to Cole's 'precepts of nomadic analysis'. Whilst they are too extensive in number to examine in their entirety here, there are two precepts in particular which I believe are relevant to my own attempts to apply the figure of the nomad in my research. The first precept is concerned with the exteriority of the researcher in relation to what they research. According to Cole (2007), in nomadic analysis the position of the researcher is continually rethought. He states that:

Such a rethinking involves participating with the research data, and accepting that contact with qualitative data fields changes the researcher in accordance with the material flows that are discovered during research (see Cole 2007).

(2013:227)

For my own research, this dynamic is particularly complex as my relationship with the Teaching Studies writing space is complicated – in many ways my history with the course and University make me 'more chess, and less Go'. The 'Teaching Studies way' pre-inscribes me and seeps into my efforts to smooth out space, whether that be in practice or in relation to the data that I suppose represents it. It is here then, that I find nomadic analysis at its most useful and it is in Cole's advocacy of 'participating with the research data' where I believe the figure of the nomad, and specifically undertaking to be nomadic in one's research, might offer me a new and different way of conceptualising research, through and in the relationship between the data and the researcher. In other words, the aim of the practitioner researcher should be deterritorialisation but deterritorialisation mindful of, and responsive to, their connectedness to the space they attempt to smooth out. This dynamic will be a point of return on several occasions in Part 2 of the thesis. Indeed, some of the chapters are exclusively orientated around this precept.

The second precept of interest concerns the utility of space. Cole conjectures that through the process of nomadic analysis, 'space is put under pressure' (ibid.). This means that for the nomad(ic researcher) any form of containment, practical and/or theoretical, induced by the norms of their landscape (in this case teacher education in the university), produces a longing for open ground. For the university-based practitioner researcher, this results in a restless curiosity about what might lie outside of institutionally determined norms. With regard to my research, this has two implications. Firstly, bound up as it is, in the politics and policy of state endorsed education, I believe I need to examine, in more precise detail, what these institutional demands and norms that constrain the space I and the students work in, might be. This will be the focus of Chapter 5. Secondly, and as already gestured towards in the preceding chapters, my task in the remainder of the thesis, will be to navigate the ground that might lie beyond these institutional demands and norms. This is extended to both the norms that govern teacher education but also those that seek to endorse particular writing practices, an area of practice for teacher educators where intervention on the part of policy makers is less keenly felt, but nonetheless, and as has been demonstrated thus far, as a space it remains 'coded, defined, bound and limited' (St. Pierre 2000:263).

### **Multiplicity and Becoming**

Although the majority of the Deleuzo-Guattarian forays that follow are most centrally concerned with the nomad and the rhizome, thinking and writing with these two figures, I inevitably draw on a variety of Deleuzian concepts. As with much Deleuzo-Guattarian theory, the concepts are interdependent, they work with, as part of, and alongside each other and can therefore rarely be contemplated in isolation. Whilst several of these other figurations I explain as and when necessary; it seems prudent here to draw out two in particular, as they have emerged as being of particular significance as the course of my thesis has unfolded, these are the multiplicity and becoming.

## **Multiplicity**

A rhizome is multiplicitous and multiplicities are rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/2004). Based on the root of the word 'multiple', it would stand to reason that multiplicity might most simply be re-described as 'many' as in the sheer number of tubers that constitutes the rhizome. However, 'many' refers to a numeric value and Deleuze and Guattari are eager to stress that the multiplicity is qualitative rather than quantitative. It cannot be measured in amounts because doing so would imply that its number can be divided and considered separately and they cannot. As stated by Roy, the multiplicity is constituted of various elements that 'exist in reciprocal presuppositions and cannot be separated' (2003:71). Rather, Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of the multiplicity might best be considered as algebraic. Martin (2010) contends that in conceiving of the multiplicity in this way, Deleuze is recalling and refining Descartes' account of space which attests that all space is directional and dimensional. It therefore has vectors and reference points and comprises longitude and latitude. As such, a line can be defined by a single coordinate (in its relation to the origin); a plane requires two coordinates; volume additional coordinates and so on. Rather than attributing numerical values to this organisation and determination of space, Deleuze's multiplicity rather than be reduced to number, is a variation 'comprised of multiples as a way to associate spaces' (Martin, 2010:215).

Refining this further, Deleuze attends to what Descartes has apparently overlooked; the fact that dimensions can be subdivided and thinned out. They have a nature of their own and these varied natures need to be considered. The concept of multiplicity does this, for whilst, like the Cartesian concept of space, it moves beyond the numerical, it also accounts for the constitutional elements of its dimensions. There is no particular essence to the vectors and dimensions (Roffe, 2005), they are multiplicities within multiplicities.

If this sounds overly convoluted and complex then Deleuze and Guattari themselves simplify the concept of multiplicity in describing it simply as 'an organisation' (1968/2004). They exemplify this organisation via biological

matter we all have ready access to: skin. (Other exemplars include temperature and irony.) Skin is a multiplicity 'of pores, little spots, little scars and black holes' (1987/2004:30). This analogy works perfectly well for me as a quick glance in the mirror will testify to the multiplicity's (my skin's) ceaselessly transforming nature which cannot be contemplated as one singular entity but neither as being separable into a determinate number of constitutive parts, as these parts are continually evolving and changing the nature of one another as they do so. Indeed, each of these parts, constitutes in own multiplicity; it is therefore beyond numerology and cannot be contemplated as such. Deleuze and Guattari are able to offer various examples of the multiplicity because every entity or event, including ourselves, is a multiplicity:

...beneath the apparent unity or coherence of an entity, or an event, lie fields of flux and multiple layers of unformed or not-fully-formed elemental states.

(Roy, 2003:87)

## **Becoming**

Understanding Deleuzo-Guattarian 'becoming' is a task made easier if it is thought of in relation to multiplicities. It denotes the process by which the multiplicity ceaselessly transforms. As a result of the refusal of closed structures and a rejection of beginnings and endings in favour of middles; entities, events, matter and bodies are forced into the perpetual movement and transformation of continual becoming – they never 'become' because to do so, signals the end of a journey; a destination. Deleuze and Guattari explain that becoming is a rhizome, it is not imitating, identifying with something, regressing or progressing but 'a verb all of its own. It does not reduce to or lead to appearing, being, equalling or producing' (1987/2004:263). It is the open ended process which has no set duration, culmination or resolution; 'a state of pure openness to the movement of pure difference' (Roy, 2003:77).

All things are becoming. This includes the human subject. This conceptualisation of self is an extension of the poststructuralist subject drawn out in Chapter 3; unstable, inconsistent and perpetually evolving. Stagoll writes,

For Deleuze, one's self must be conceived as a constantly changing assemblage of forces, an epiphenomenon arising from chance confluences of languages, organisms, societies, expectations, laws and so on.

(2005:22)

The reference to chance in Stagoll's account is significant. It evokes the rejection of design and order. In doing so, the process of becoming extends our conceptualisation of rhizomatic thought. Patterns, structure and order are not inherent characteristics, either in the social or natural world; metaphysically then, they are, or at least should be, of less consequence than we have hitherto given them credit for.

### **Reflective interlude: Beginning with metaphors**

Initially, my theoretical investment in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, led mainly to a series of rearticulations of ideas I had already had. I do not think of this as necessarily a bad thing; neither (at least not for now) do I consider this as a misuse or indeed a stepping stone to 'doing Deleuze proper'. Likened to learning a new language,<sup>21</sup> the various stages of understanding Deleuze can be seen as necessary components to the whole, none more significant or prestigious than the other. In acquiring a second (or third or fourth language) the process of language transfer is inevitable: we grapple around for word for word equivalents and view cognates<sup>22</sup> as gifts. These are no more or less useful than syntax or pronunciation for example; they are simply parts of the whole.

Initially, my engagement with Deleuzian figures resembled language transfer. In a similar way to which a musician transposes musical notation for different

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<sup>21</sup> This is not a stretch of the imagination. My experience of reading Deleuze is not so far removed from reading a novel, in say, French; a language in which I have a basic understanding; enough to 'get by', but not adequate enough to sustain a conversation that concerns much more than ordering drinks or enquiring into one's state of well-being.

<sup>22</sup> Words that have the same linguistic derivation for example: *night* (English), *nuit* (French), *nacht* (German), *nacht* (Dutch),

instruments or voices,<sup>23</sup> I transposed my central thesis. The writing model that I had worked with up until my Deleuzian encounter and that I had come to understand as 'linear and cumulative', became a striated space; both for the students and for myself. The sequential structure (*'from a state of lesser capability to one of more knowledgeable, more able and more 'effective teacher,'* see page 33, Chapter 2) and a tendency towards a display of betterment as a concluding representation of progress became territorialised land; already 'coded, defined and bound'. Following on from this, my desire to consider other possibilities, metamorphosed as a nomadic response. I charged myself with smoothing out the written space for the students (and for myself) and hoping to hold on to these spaces in practice. Potential 'possibilities' would be my map, they would be rhizomatic and I would be a Deleuzian nomad. In this way I slowly became more apt at speaking Deleuzian and, this in itself, I see as an essential skill. Whilst my level of fluency remains a work in progress, I at least feel that in the common parlance of language acquisition I can 'get by'.

However useful basic linguistic competence might be, the prospect of acquiring something completely anew is especially enticing. For example, 'l'esprit de l'escalier' in French, which translates literally as 'stairwell wit', refers to a too-late retort thought of only after departure. It is the poor substitute for the 'in the moment' absence of the enviable and proudly executed quip. There is no English equivalent. Discovering the phrase 'l'esprit de l'escalier' was glorious to me – its newness, the fact that it filled a gap in my vocabulary I didn't know existed.

I wondered if the prospect proffered by Gale (2010) that Deleuze could be a 'philosophy of use' had similar potential to my new found stairwell-wit (although on a slightly grander scale). Could Deleuze bring something to my research that working outside a Deleuzian framework would have remained unfound, as it

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<sup>23</sup> In music, the process of transposition means that whilst the rhythm and pattern of the music stay the same because the singer or instrument has or might change, the musical score is provided in a suitable format to accommodate variations in the tessituras (or comfortable range) of the individuals accessing it. (For example, a shift down an octave for the transposition of a violin score for a flute, and so from treble clef notation to bass clef.) The result of the process being that whilst the melody will essentially sound the same, the score presents itself differently.



had no equivalent elsewhere? Were there gaps in my research that I did not yet know existed? If I wanted to move past the Deleuzian temptation of 'simply reinscribing the old methodology with [a] new language' (Mazzei and McCoy, 2010:504) I needed more from the figures than that which I had already procured. Due to the nature of my research (a teacher educator researching her own practice, which consists of designing opportunities for student teachers and supporting their endeavours in researching their own practice) I decided that 'use' could be actualised in two different, but inevitably interconnected ways. The first of these would concern my own writing. In remaining cognisant of my original intent of exposing and then actively subverting some of the well-established writing myths outlined in the previous chapter, I am now of the belief that Deleuzian figures may well be able to provide both the inspiration as well as the methodology to re-imagine what the remainder of this research might look like. There are several examples of this kind of reimagining that I have taken inspiration from; most notably Alvermann (2000), Davis (2009), Richardson (2000) and St. Pierre (2000). Whilst I do not intend to reproduce their studies, I do unashamedly and brazenly borrow their ideas.

The second of the forms by which a philosophy of use might be realised is through pedagogy. Whilst, as previously mentioned, the pragmatic constraints of my research have meant that I cannot redesign courses, or even units within courses, this does not render me a professional without agency. Pedagogy is intrinsically linked to identity and constitutes much more than 'outcomes' – written or otherwise. What belies outcomes is, I believe, a question of pedagogy and the remaining chapters will deal with these questions in a more focussed way than what has been given over so far. Both of these uses will be largely informed by the characteristics of the figures as outlined earlier in this chapter. By characteristics, I refer to the active qualities of the figures, for example, the interconnectedness of the nomad and the space she inhabits or the ability of the rhizome to find strange yet productive connections between its various points. These kinds of qualities will be those that I use to write and rethink my practice.

# Chapter 5: A History of Educational 'Progress'

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## Preamble

The intention of this chapter is to convey something of the containment (practical and theoretical) induced by the norms of the landscape in which this thesis is set – teacher education in the university. As previously discussed, for the university-based practitioner researcher, any nomadic adventure relies on their curiosity and willingness to explore what might lie outside of the institutionally determined norms to which their practice, thinking and being, is subjected. To do this, I believe it is necessary to understand something of what those norms might be, how they are propagated and their potential impact and effect on shaping the lives of those that are subjected to them. Whilst I have already attended to the culture of student writing in the university and the regulatory practices that striate this space, I have not yet focussed on the specificity of the student teacher. Bound up as they are in the politics and policy of state endorsed teacher education and primary school education more generally, I believe I need to examine, in more precise detail, what additional institutional demands and norms constrain the space I and the students work within. This is an important endeavour, for as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) note, policy narratives locate the researcher in history, simultaneously guiding and constraining the work that will be done in any study. The application of this point to my own research is doubly significant as I am essentially a researcher who is studying the research practices of her students.

Further to this, and returning to the poststructural underpinnings of my research, it is important that I realise and pay due attention to both the discourse and discursive practices that produce the social worlds which we (the students and I) inhabit. This is not to imply that we are fixed by discourse (in keeping with the discussion of self in Chapter 3) but to acknowledge that we

are certainly affected and positioned by them. For the students I teach, the world of compulsory education, specifically primary education, is one in which they are firmly rooted. It makes sense therefore to spend some time thinking about what this world 'looks and feels like'. This is an important task for the poststructuralist researcher, as Davis and Gannon (2005) explain, discourse and discursive and regulatory practices both speak into existence the worlds we inhabit, but also constrain the possibilities of existence within them. Understanding these constraints is, I think, crucial before attempts are made to transgress the boundaries and limitations they impose.

In this chapter therefore, I intend to detail a brief history of educational 'progress'. It is important to preview what follows with a couple of academic disclaimers. Firstly, I am not an educational historian. What follows is a summary of what I have come to understand as significant events in the shaping of primary education as it is today. This is a crude task. Shifts in policy, changes of government, legislative arrangements and their subsequent effect are considered. However to do so in sufficient detail to do justice to the complicated and indistinct ways in which these things unfold would require much more than a chapter's worth of attention. What I recreate here is an outline of what are generally understood as periods of significance in the evolution of primary education; no more. I will, as a way of bringing to life what might otherwise seem a dry exposition of dates and associated events, attempt to articulate the ways in which the policy adventures of the government of the day, play out in the day-to-day experiences of children and (student) teachers. In this venture I will offer two vignettes that will be a point of return after the exposition of the history of policy and practice that constitutes the main body of writing in this chapter. The vignettes are of course indicative of the time in which they occurred. They are not uncommon experiences or horror stories of teaching. However they are told for a particular purpose and that is to illustrate something of the complicated political, historical and ideological dynamic that infects the work of teachers and schooling more generally.

My second academic disclaimer: historic accounts such as the one I attempt to construct here tend to conceal more than they reveal (Ball, 2008). My telling is of course partial and it is also shaped by my own ideological beliefs and political persuasions. This is '*my*' or '*a*' history of the educational present; it is not '*the*' history of the educational present; syntactically there might seem little difference here; semantically, the two are worlds apart.

## **The vignettes**

### **Vignette 1<sup>24</sup>**

It is 2003. I am a student teacher and I am undertaking my third block placement. I am fortunate enough to be placed in a Year 6 class; fortunate because this is the age group I eventually want to teach. My class teacher and mentor is also proving to be both supportive and knowledgeable, although I am aware that some of her practices run contrary to those which have been described to us at university as being 'best practice'. I note for example that she plans her lessons the day before and it consists of handwritten scribbles on a pad of lined A4 paper. This is a world away from my carefully produced word-processed, tabled and detailed documents which include everything from lists of resources, to questions I might ask the children, to details of the tasks I have decided will best enable the children to meet my carefully worded learning objectives and lists of cross-references to policy and curriculum documents. However, I also understand that as an experienced deputy head and Year 6 teacher, my mentor probably doesn't need such details on paper – she carries them with her in her head, and the last minute nature of her planning, this is because she needs to know what the children are able to do today, before she plans what they will do tomorrow. As a third year undergraduate student I teach for most of the school week – 60 per cent to be precise. When I am not teaching I sometimes observe the class teacher. During one of the weeks in which I am not teaching literacy I notice that the class teacher has chosen to use the exemplar materials provided in the National Literacy Strategy. The unit is on narrative. The texts that the children use for shared reading are those suggested in the strategy. The activities they undertake are also those suggested in the strategy. I notice that the class teacher sits wedged between the mini-whiteboard (to which extracts of text are blu-tacked) and an A3 enlarged copy of the teacher's 'script' which is also provided with the strategy documents. This is a script in a very real sense. It includes word-for-word, what the teacher could say. The children are even on there; their possible responses to the teacher's questions given. I notice how difficult it is for the class teacher to keep referring back to the script whilst trying to keep the children engaged in the learning. I think the lesson is dull. I wonder

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<sup>24</sup> The vignettes assume familiarity with the English school system. The following terms are explained in full in the glossary: **block placement, Year 6, National Literacy Strategy, shared reading, Senior Leadership Team, Statutory Assessment Tests, level/ level 4, local authority, Ofsted, special measures.**

why she has chosen to deliver it like this and then reason that as a deputy head she is so busy that if someone else has done the planning for her, doing it again or differently, probably seems like a waste of her time.

## **Vignette 2**

It's not long into the spring term of 2008 and I'm in a meeting with the rest of the Senior Leadership Team. We sit around a table in my otherwise empty Year 6 classroom with various bits of 'documentation' scattered out in front of us. This is the data the parallel Year 6 teacher and I (we are a two-form entry school) have compiled about our 60 or so Year 6 children based on their last practise SATs (Statutory Assessments Tests). We are grouping the children by 'level' across the three core subjects. We agree that the borderlines must be our priority. All children that achieved a level 3b or 3a are thus grouped together – we know that in order to meet our school target we need to move all of these children to a level 4 by SATs week. This is no mean feat. We decide that the group will be split further and we will commandeer one of the deputy heads (he doesn't have his own class) to work alongside the other Year 6 teacher in the run up to May. I get the possible level 5s. We work through and discuss the children still struggling to achieve at least a level 3b. (This is not as few as you would imagine, especially in literacy. The school serves a population of mainly Pakistani heritage families. For many of our children English is not their first language and whilst most speak relatively well, many struggle with the assessments in reading, writing and spelling. Depending on the length of time they have been a resident in the UK, some of the children will be exempt from taking the test – for this we are immensely grateful. Some, however, will sit the test.) We spend some time sorting the children into those we think are unlikely to achieve, even with intervention, a level 4 and those who just might scrape through. The 'won't achieve' group will now spend each morning with our higher level teaching assistant. She will do what she can.

As members of the Senior Leadership Team, we all know the gravity of the situation. In the past, our results have led us to be 'of concern' to the local authority. We are due an Ofsted inspection and we are aware of rumours in the authority that we might be put into 'special measures'; missing our level 4 targets, we believe, will seal our fate.

## **Brief history of the not so distant past**

The next section of this chapter is organised by political era and specifically the two most recent changes of government, prior to the 2010 election. The reason for the neglect of our most recent political swing is that at the time of writing, whilst reforms to the primary sector have been plentiful in number, the effects have yet to be fully realised. 2010 marked the beginning of a lengthy

consultation period to review both the primary national curriculum as well as other major policy areas, including standardised assessments and practice in Special Educational Needs (SEN). Whilst some significant changes have already taken place, including a new statutory framework for the early years foundation stage and a revised framework for Ofsted, several of the major reforms, including the introduction of a new national curriculum and a revised code of practice for SEN remain in their 'implementation phase'. It seems wise therefore to omit 2010 onwards, as discussion regarding the impact of these reforms on teachers, would, at this point, be grounded to too significant a degree in conjecture.

The remainder of this chapter will therefore be divided by the political eras: 1979 – 1997 and 1997 – 2010. It is important to note that their content refers to policy changes and subsequent developments in school practices and other institutions associated or connected to education in England only. Education policy has been the remit of the devolved legislatures of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1999.

### **1979 – 1997: the plight of individual boys and girls**

*..it's the plight of individual boys and girls which worries me most. Too often, our children don't get the education they need—the education they deserve. And in the inner cities—where youngsters must have a decent education if they are to have a better future—that opportunity is all too often snatched from them by hard left education authorities and extremist teachers. And children who need to be able to count and multiply are learning anti-racist mathematics—whatever that may be. Children who need to be able to express themselves in clear English are being taught political slogans. Children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay. And children who need encouragement—and children do so much need encouragement—so many children—they are being taught that our society offers them no future.*

Margaret Thatcher.  
1987 – Speech to Conservative Party Conference.

With the benefit of hindsight this speech can be thought of as one of Thatcher's final opportunities to concretise the ideological framework that has been carefully constructed and laid before the electorate to herald and rhetorically necessitate the Education Reform Act of the subsequent year. The impact of the act is significant, not least because it introduces for the first time a national curriculum. (Up until this point, schools and teachers had the responsibility of deciding what best to teach their children, albeit with considerable support and influence provided at a local level by Local Education Authorities and nationally by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools or HMI<sup>25</sup>.) However, it also marks 'the culmination of changes that had been developing in education over many years' (Wyse et al., 2010). To understand some of these changes it is necessary to travel back in time still further, to another speech, by another Prime Minister; that is, the now infamous Ruskin College speech, by the then Labour premier James Callaghan.

It is 1976 and concern about the quality of educational provision in the UK is growing. Callaghan uses his platform at Ruskin to very publicly summarise and make explicit what has been for some time simmering under the surface of society's political consciousness. In particular, he draws attention to unease felt by parents and others at 'new informal methods' of teaching. He questions how successful such methods can be in preparing children for the world of work, if left in inept hands. A focus on basic skills and a core curriculum are offered by way of mitigating against the worst of this 'informality'.

In retrospect, this speech was and is interpreted and understood by educational historians as marking the beginning of the publically political debate on education in the modern era (Chitty, 1989). A key characteristic of this debate is that for the first time, the general assessment of the ill-health of the education sector is conflated with questions and concerns regarding the

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<sup>25</sup> Please see the glossary for a full explanation of the terms **Local Education Authorities (LEA)** and **Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI)**.

competence of the teaching profession. This is what Ball (1990) refers to as (borrowing from Kenway, 1987, cited in Ball, 1990) the 'discourse of derision' and Callaghan's Ruskin speech is a key contributor. This, so-called derision, can be traced back largely to the perception of the influence of the 1967 Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967). The review, chaired by the report's namesake Lady Bridget Plowden, essentially sought to reveal and comment upon the general state of primary education in England. However, the report also made key recommendations on the kinds of experiences to which young children might best respond and it is for these that it is best known. In outlining a particular philosophy of early education on which recommendations for reform might be based, the report consequently and over time, gained a reputation as progressive due to its emphasis on play, child-centred education and enquiry based learning. It is to these pedagogical principles and their enactment by primary school teachers that Callaghan refers to several times during his Ruskin speech as the 'informal methods' which have caused so much concern.

Ironically, the actual impact of the Plowden Report on children's experiences of school was subsequently found to be minimal and very much dependent on local authority interest in developing child-centred working practices in their schools (see the government commissioned 'three wise men report, Alexander et al., 1992, as well as research by Galton et al., 1980). Nevertheless, it contributed significantly towards the public and political debate on education that categorised the era before and directly after Ruskin. The crux of the debate is one that has long captured the attention of educators; essentially, what is it that teachers should, or should not do, to promote and extend children's learning? For a long time, and before Plowden, the answer had seemed quite straightforward, in that the teacher had the responsibility to a) know things and b) show or explain to children what they knew. Teaching this way is highly visible. The teacher may stand or sit at the front of a class, commanding their attention. She may explain, or demonstrate a new skill. The children will listen and their success (as well as that of the teacher) will



subsequently be measured by their ability to repeat, apply, refine and possibly extend the taught skill. However, the Plowden Report (1967) introduces a different set of teacher activities. Children are endowed with trust and responsibility to learn and discover between themselves in contexts designed by the class teacher. In doing so, the teacher need know no less, but her presence in the classroom may look quite different. She may not be at the front of the class, she may not even have full control over what the children learn (the tasks might be open-ended or include an element of choice) and what is more, the traditional boundaries between subjects, which carve up knowledge and skills into discrete and commonly recognisable units (history, science, art, numeracy) might be reconfigured in favour of broad themes. This kind of teaching and the question of whether it is more or less effective than the adoption of a more traditional style, has been the subject of debate since the publication of Plowden. If children are not taught subjects, then how might they learn 'the basics?' If the teacher does not stand up at the front of the class and command attention, then how might she discipline children? If the children decide what and how to learn, then how might curricula be designed?

The problem for educational policy and therefore 'progress' is that 'the great (political) debate' on education that the Ruskin speech was intended to herald, did not mark the advent of a period of exploration into questions such as these. Rather, the subsequent debate was, to a large extent, hijacked by a hyperbolic crusade to right Plowden's supposed wrongs. Taken up by Callaghan at Ruskin and further popularised by Thatcher and her government, there was a perception that the curriculum and what teachers did lacked rigour and a focus on the things that children really needed to learn. The curriculum was perceived and presented as 'out of control' (Ball, 2008) and overly influenced by the 'dubious' political influences of university educated teachers.

It is from here we can see the ground on which the Thatcher speech of 1987 is built. 'Anti-racist maths', 'political slogans' and being taught about the 'inalienable right to be gay', are the ultimate outcomes of a system presided over by a Plowden-crazed, hard-left workforce (imaginary or otherwise). The

discourse of derision was in full swing. The educational outcomes of children were being hampered because teachers were making the wrong decisions about what and how to teach them and in 1987, Thatcher is smoothing over the final concrete foundations on which the major changes that are afoot are to be built.

### **The antidote**

The passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) marked the dawn of a period of significant adjustment for primary teachers and the children for whose education and welfare they are responsible. The Act was the legislative culmination of the 'debates' described above; a purposefully and intentioned response to the perceived weaknesses in the education system. It was specifically designed to rein in teachers, held responsible (at least in the eyes of some) for the worst excesses and neglect propounded by progressivism.

There are several key elements to the Act, each corresponding to events that preceded its implementation. The first, and possibly the most influential of these key features, is the introduction of a national curriculum. Up until this point, what children learned in schools had been decided locally by teachers in conjunction with local authorities. However, with events seemingly making clear the impressionability of teachers and council workers, as well as their ideological propensities, and in an attempt to avoid the 'unhelpful' influences of both, the basic content of lessons would, post-1988, be decided centrally, by ministers and civil servants and disseminated via quangos (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations) acting on their behalf. The curriculum that followed was unsurprisingly organised by subject but perhaps rather more significantly, these subjects were allocated a status. The three 'core subjects' (English, maths and science) would become the main focus of the curriculum - basic skills, the bedrock of primary education.

If there is one legacy worthy of note of the period between the publication of the Plowden Report and the 1988 ERA, it is one of suspicion. The events that

have led up to this point in history placed teachers at the centre of a perceived crisis in education and trust in their capabilities to operate autonomously, as a result, gradually eroded. As a consequence, the ERA introduced a series of measures designed to be 'teacher proof' (Ball, 2008); the curriculum being one example. The second move for teacher proofing education came by way of statutory assessments. The introduction of a standardised and compulsory assessment regime (in 1988, these would be administered at the end of every key stage) would not only allow children's progress to be tracked in a way that dispensed with the need for teachers' judgments but eventually, would also allow for a quantitative and therefore comparable measure of their success (or otherwise) against all other teachers and schools.

Even before the move to utilise standardised testing as a comparative measure of success, the impact of both a centralised curriculum and statutory testing was keenly felt and in combination they had a decisive effect not only on children's learning, but also on the working lives of teachers. The Primary Assessment Curriculum and Experience (PACE) research project reported on the impact of the ERA over several stages of its implementation (see McNess et al., 2001). The first of these stages, October 1989 - December 1992, looked specifically at the effect of The National Curriculum and other legislative changes in key stage one, where the impact of the ERA was initially concentrated due to its dubious accolade of being the first key stage to experience implementation. Amongst the key findings of the PACE project were the conclusions that the act had resulted in: for teachers; an intensification of workload and a loss of autonomy, and, for children; fewer opportunities to actively participate in lesson content and make choices about their own work, more whole class teaching (as opposed to small group, paired or one-to-one work) and more grouping by ability (Wyse et al., 2010). It seems that as the grip on teachers' professional lives tightened, so in turn did the teachers' grip on what children learnt; when and how.

The remaining nine years of the Conservative government which followed the 1988 Act would, however, see many more substantial changes to education and

teaching than the introduction of a national curriculum and uniform testing could take credit for. For me, the root causes of these changes can be exemplified by one key policy – the publication of data ranking schools' achievements in the statutory assessment tests. The concept of standardised testing is, in and of itself, largely inoffensive. As much as it might be argued that such policy measures are an attack on teacher professionalism, they might also ostensibly be defended as providing class teachers with an objective and standardised measure of pupils' attainment. The decision in 1992 however to make the data derived from the administration of testing across the primary and secondary education phases publicly available and to then rank schools in order of success against these data outputs, muddies the waters considerably. The move was indicative of the wider economic and social policy which would come to epitomise the Thatcher era. Supposedly the brainchild of ideologue Keith Joseph (Ball, 2008) and influenced heavily by the politics of the 'new right'<sup>26</sup>, the changes to educational policy were saturated with the philosophies of neoliberalism, described by Olssen et al. as the;

...positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation.

(2004:136)

The underpinning argument for the creation of such a market goes crudely as follows: the intrusion of the (welfare) state into the lives of its citizens is an expensive burden to the economy (because it is too expensive) and to society as a whole (because it breeds dependency). In order to minimise these undesirable effects, a new relationship between state, economy and the public needs to be realised, where the locus of responsibility returns to the individual and public expenditure can be kept manageable. This conception of the relationship between the state and the individual is based largely on the liberal philosophies of prominent 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers such as Locke and Hobbes, where commitment to personal freedom and individualism (as opposed to collectivism) via state protection of the individuals autonomy, goods and

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<sup>26</sup> Olssen et al. (2004) defines and distinguishes between the 'new right' and neo-liberalism as follows: 'the concept of the 'new right' tends to adhere more to the groups or interests, while that of neo-liberalism has tended to be used to refer to the discursive philosophical, economic and politics doctrines so supported' (2004:134).

property is considered the central and essential basis for a functioning, enlightened and progressive society (Robertson, 2008). The 'new right' movement builds on these precepts and in doing so extends the responsibility of the state to ensure the economic conditions required for the individual to prosper. This economic state is constructed via market mechanisms and principles, namely that: competition ensures resources and status are allocated efficiently and fairly and that for the markets to operate to their maximum capacity governments should rule from a distance through devolved management (although this is actualised through a system of less bureaucracy rather than less control) (Olssen et al. 2004).

In the earlier years of Thatcher's premiership, the basic principles of neo-liberalism were actualised in major public sector reforms for example, the dismantling, selling off and therefore privatisation of what had been, up until this point, public sector services (as for example with telecommunications and passenger rail services). Central to these policy moves were a series of key principles which reflected the classical economic liberalism of Joseph and other members of the 'new right' movement, that is; consumer choice, competition and individualism, and it is these core values, (which would eventually become indicative of and even synonymous with Thatcherism) that would serve to shape reforms to all public sector services. In the second term of Thatcher's premiership this policy would extend to encompass those public services that could not so easily be sold off. The publication of results was one means by which a market-led, neo-liberal philosophy could be realised in education. Put simply, it allowed 'consumers' to make 'informed choices'. Good schools were easy to spot; they were at the top of the league table, and should parents (consumers) opt for those good schools in significant number, and with policy changes to school funding ensuring a 'per capita' budget allocation, the wheat from the chaff of the schooling system could more easily and efficiently be sorted – a school market was hence created.

One crucial and final point to note regarding this particular policy change, other than it being indicative of wider reforms, is the possible impact on schooling

and the working lives of teachers. Within such a system, summative assessment serves a dual purpose, it both allows for a judgement to be made regarding the attainment of pupils, whilst simultaneously providing a measure of whole school success. In the new culture of competition these assessment 'outputs' became crucial to the infrastructure of school promotion. They were and are a mechanism by which you/your school might be glorified and praised, or 'named and shamed', and for this fact their impact is particularly significant.

### **1997 – 2010: Things can only get better?**

1997 had the feeling of a hopeful year. If the successive Conservative administrations had left a bad taste in the mouth of educationalists, 'New Labour' would hopefully cleanse the palate. It was certainly the case that education would feature prominently in policy reform. With Blair's rallying cry of '*education, education, education*' ringing in our ears and the stirring musical accompaniment to Labour's landslide victory ('Things Can Only Get Better') you would have been hard-pressed not to indulge in a little hopeful eagerness. For many critics however (see Stronach et al., 2010) this hopefulness would be short lived. New Labour would, in effect, take much of what was of concern to those unconvinced by the policy reform of the 'new right', and make them a 'permanent feature of contemporary modernisation' (ibid.). Multiple 'innovations' and centralised and frequent policy reforms would become a familiar backdrop to the professional lives of primary school teachers. Indeed, the furore over the centralisation of the curriculum would soon pale into insignificance against the previously 'unthinkable' level of prescriptive detail of the subsequent curricular and pedagogical pronouncements (Alexander, 2008).

### **Raising standards – the tyranny of common sense**

As demonstrated above, the ground work for reform involves the construction of a convincing argument for change. However, with the backlash against

progressivism dissipating, New Labour would need to search out a new driver for publicly necessitating wide scale policy intervention. David Blunkett (the then Secretary of State for Education) in his foreword to the 1997 education White Paper 'Excellence in Schools', outlines this succinctly in what, in political terms, seems a rhetorical stroke of genius – 'the standards agenda'. In the first instance and using their predecessor's quantitative measure of schools' success, New Labour would begin by drawing the public's attention to what was referred to at the time as the 'culture of complacency' (Blunkett, 1997:3).

In primary schools, the data gathered using the instruments of the previous government spoke for themselves – roughly only half of 11 year olds were managing to achieve a level 4 or above (level 4 representing the expected level of attainment at the end of key stage two) in literacy and numeracy<sup>27</sup>. Despite a national curriculum and a focus on 'the basics', by its own measure, the primary school system of the previous government was seemingly failing approximately half of its students. Rather than questioning the method and mechanisms by which student success was measured, New Labour instead sought to plough their considerable resources into a raft of policies and initiatives that would allow for this particular measure of success to demonstrate improvement.

The genius here, I think, lies in the recourse to common sense, humorously drawn out in Ken Robinson's 2010 RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce) lecture as follows,

...people say we have to raise standards, as if this is a breakthrough, you know, 'like really?' Yes, we should; why would you want to lower them? I haven't come across an argument yet that persuades me of lowering them.

(Robinson, 2010:online.)

It might well be argued that the common sense appeal of the argument works to obscure what belies it. You would, after all, as Robinson points out, be hard pressed to find an educationalist who would be willing to argue against 'standards'; to do so seems absurd.

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix C for full data set. Relevant sections are highlighted in yellow.

With its justification in place, the education White Paper of 1997 detailed and introduced a tranche of measures aimed at securing the success of the ambitious standards drive the Labour government would preside over in the following years. Here, it is interesting to note the continuities as well as departures from what had gone before. Whilst New Labour maintained that they were interested in 'standards over structures' and had criticised the previous administration for being too obsessed with the latter, structures were by no means ignored. Indeed, many of the proposed changes appeared deeply structural and allowed for the continuation of accusations of market-led, neo-liberal values interfering with and influencing educational policy (Brain et al, 2006). The publication of attainment data and a focus on 'the basics', was embraced and further refined. Schools would now not only be pitted against one another, but also against their own previous achievements, as each school would be set targets for raising standards in the core subjects based on their previous attainment record. The inspection regime was also tightened with measures introduced to reflect a 'zero-tolerance approach' (DfEE, 1997) to schools identified as failing. In extreme circumstances, badly performing schools would be closed and their pupils sent elsewhere.

It was not however, all bad news. The White Paper also introduced the concept of 'value-added', an additional measure of pupil progress taken against a baseline attainment score made upon school entry and whilst this measure was not used to inform league tables or target setting, it did allow for schools to compare the rates of progress made by their children against schools with a comparable intake. In addition, much of the increased education budget was spent on human resources. Class sizes were capped and the numbers of teachers and teaching assistants increased. Ultimately however, the driver for reform remained the raising of standards measured by raw scores of attainment in literacy and numeracy. To this end, after making it clear that higher standards in learning were only ever going to be achieved through higher standards in teaching, New Labour introduced what was arguably to become



their most controversial and interventionist educational policy – the literacy and numeracy hours.

### **The National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies**

Whilst the only statutory mandate of the 1997 White Paper was to ensure that 'at least an hour each day [was] devoted to both literacy and numeracy in every primary school' (DfEE, 1997:5) (not overly interventionist when considered on its own), the proposals also ensured there would be action to ensure that these hours were not wasted on 'poor quality teaching' (DfEE, 1997:25). To avoid this, and arguably in a move to further 'teacher proof' (Ball, 2010) curriculum, national guidelines and training were introduced for all primary teachers outlining 'best practice in the teaching of literacy and numeracy' (DfEE, 1997:5). This so-called 'best practice' guidance was realised in the guise of The National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) and The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and whilst neither was compulsory, they would have a marked impact on children's educative experience, pedagogy and on teachers' professionalism more widely.

The impact was due largely to the level of prescription that each document and the plethora of additional resource material that was subsequently released contained; an example of the 'previously unthinkable level of prescriptive detail' Alexander refers to when writing in 2008. Both the NLS and NNS were tightly structured. Learning was organised into sequences of key objectives subdivided into year groups and then by 'term'. Beyond this, a suggested lesson structure with timings for each component was offered. Suggestions for the types of activities a class teacher might choose to 'deliver' in these time slots were also offered – shared writing, guided reading, the plenary, direct teaching and questioning of the whole class, were all detailed and defended as good practice and subsequent publications further explained and exemplified their correct use. Whilst the non-statutory nature of the documentation was maintained, it was also very clear, both through the documentation and via

encouragement by Ofsted in its publication of reports, that the key features of the national strategies were those associated with good practice.

The extent to which the NNS and NLS had been adopted by schools was not, in and of itself, a measure of political success. Rather, success lay in policy makers' ability to demonstrate the 'raising of standards' and it was the realisation of these aims that provided the then Labour government, with a much needed educational coup – imperative for an administration that claimed education as its priority. The inflation of SATs scores in the four years that followed the introduction of the strategies, as well as other measures intended on boosting attainment in 'the basics', apparently spoke for themselves. They allowed David Blunkett, in his speech on education to the Labour Party Conference in 2000 to boast of the 'real improvements in literacy and numeracy. In two years, literacy up 10 points, numeracy up 13 points' (Local Government Chronicle, 2000: online).

'Real improvement' here is clearly understood, at least publicly, as synonymous with inflated point scores. However, a quick glance beyond the surface of party political propaganda offers varied possible explanations and interpretations of meaning, not least in the questioning of the assumption that higher scores and improved understanding and skills are one and the same. Wyse et al. (2010) for example, offer the possibility that with the stakes higher than ever before, grade inflation may have simply reflected teachers' improved ability to coach pupils for the tests, hence the improvement in results. A hypothesis supported by a similar inflation in science attainment levels, a subject where no such comparable national strategy existed. Whatever the perceived benefits, the effect on teaching and learning for almost half of the school week was profound.

Whilst the NLS and NNS had far reaching practical consequences, I do not think it is too hyperbolic to suggest that their place in educational history is marked by more than just their pedagogical significance. Symbolically, the strategies signalled the beginning of a period of state intervention that would work to seriously reshape the professional landscape of teaching. What had begun with

the centralisation of curriculum in the late 1980s would, from 1997 onwards, develop into an almost constant state of interference in the day-to-day decision making processes of schools and teachers. In the interim period between the early years of New Labour and the more recent transition to a coalition government in 2010, intervention has continued to ebb and flow as teachers scramble to make sense of each directive as it overlaps, replaces or works to support the implementation of its predecessors.

Stronach et al. (2010) describe this phase of educational history as:

...bedevilled by a combination of 'moral panics' and 'policy hysteria'... There have been too many initiatives, too much short term response to media engendered scares, involving ever shortening cycles of reform, multiple innovations, frequent policy shifts, an increasing tendency for reforms to become symbolic in nature, a scapegoating of systems, professional and client groups, shifting meanings within the central vocabulary of reforms, an erosion of professional discretion, and untested and untestable success claims.

(2010: 1)

### **Reflective interlude: application to the thesis**

So, why this detour into educational policy and 'progress' and, importantly for my thesis, what relation does it bear to students' writing? Firstly, and significantly, I think of it as allowing me to texture the accounts of the classroom present that the students offer. It means that both I and they can begin to make sense of the myriad of ways their teaching practice is shaped and how the world of teaching and education they work and therefore live within, impacts on who they are, what they see and think and therefore, ultimately, what they do. This argument will be taken up further in Part 2 of the thesis where I will look to make sense of data in relation to the world of teaching which the students and I inhabit. For now, I will return to the vignettes (please see page 83 and 84) by way of modelling this process; bringing to life the policy landscape of educational policy described above.

## Commentary on Vignette 1

By 2003 the literacy and numeracy strategies were widely used in schools. All my teaching practices as a student, from 2000 until 2004 revolved around their use. During my third year as a student teacher, having been allocated a Year 6 class for the duration of my school placement, the influence of the strategies was felt particularly keenly. For example, in the slow build-up to SATs, the class teacher and therefore I, regularly practised what the class teacher described as 'doubling-up'. This was a process whereby should it be felt that the children had not fully grasped the content of the literacy or numeracy taught in the morning, the lesson would be repeated in the afternoon, the allocation of literacy or numeracy time for the children therefore 'doubling'. The combination of the SATs and national strategies had, in this school at least, certainly been successful in refocusing the curriculum of Year 6 children on the 'core subjects'. The vignette describes a typical lesson during this 'build-up' time. However, rather than allowing the story to serve as a symbolic whole I would instead like to narrow my focus in order that I might tease out some of the vignette's smaller constitutive parts.

The vignette positions me both in the role of student teacher, but also as observer. It is a recount of the teaching practices of another and therefore includes something of what I recall of the placement but also some of the judgements I remember making along the way. These characteristics are present in both the general synopsis of the placement with which the vignette begins *'...some of her practices run contrary to those which have been described to us at university as being 'best practice''* and also in latter sections where the focus narrows to an evaluation of a particular teaching event *'I think the lesson is dull.'* I would like to take both of these statements as a starting point for analysis.

### 'Best Practice'

Regrettably, this is a phrase so deeply entrenched in my vocabulary as a teacher, that I still catch myself using it in lectures and seminars with students. I have chosen to focus on it here because I believe it to be indicative of some of the more subtle effects of the period of educational progress examined above. The phrase crops up no fewer than 21 times in the 1997 White Paper. It is small wonder the phrase seeped into teachers' everyday lexicon.

Its appropriation into the everyday language of teachers and other professionals in the field is significant. Poststructural critiques of language allow us insight into the process by which language and our construction of reality interplay. One does not precede the other; rather language 'makes us', as much as we 'make it'. As St. Pierre notes, language operates to produce 'very real, material and [often] damaging structures in the world' (1997:481). This line of thinking can be furthered via application of Derrida's concept of language as a system of differences. Here words are understood as deriving meaning through their difference to other words rather than their relation to the object/concept that they signify. Derrida (cited in Gergen:1999) also argues that meaning based on differences is held within a continual process of adjustment as meaning is tied to social contexts and therefore the process of meaning making is fluid, changing and effected by the context within which language is spoken or written. In addition, both the presences and the absences of the signifier (the word) are of value and so what the word seems to represent is of equal importance to that which it does not. Both of these facets combined contribute to the reciprocal determination of meaning. (Although this cannot be understood as a 'pinning down' of meaning because of the contextualised nature of both the presences and absences each word constitutes.)

There are two points of significance that need to be drawn out here. The first relates to presence and absence. Via a process of signification, one set of practices is gradually taken as representative of what is good or 'best'. However, as Derrida (1978/2002) highlights, presence creates absence and both serve equally in the process of signification. What this means for those responsible for espousing recipes for teacher/learner success, is that the

signifier 'bad practice' is rendered unnecessary. Policy makers have no need to draw attention to what is bad and hence do not need to justify why one set of practices is more worthy, effectual or suitable than another. This would require deep thought and a time-consuming process of close analysis where one system or style, its varied applications and possible outcomes are systematically evaluated against those of another. By only sanctioning and explicitly naming particular practices as 'good' what remains, or what is absent, quietly becomes at best 'not good', or, at worst, simply bad.

In doing so, the necessary practice of contingency is also suppressed. Policy by its nature offers a 'best fit'. In the vast majority of day-to-day teaching occurrences, what is appropriate for the children on that day, in that lesson, with that teacher, is of course dependent on a myriad of factors, many of which will be unknown to policy makers. (They are often unknown to the teacher until they happen.) The idea that one set of practices have been predetermined as legitimate and as prerequisite of academic success across the whole primary phase (with the exception of early years' provision which has been given its own) is a point of contention. In the vignette, whilst I do not name the class teacher's 'planning practice' as bad, my teacher education up until this point has trained me to notice its difference from what I have been told is 'good'. This leaves me in the odd position of, as a third year student teacher, perceiving the need and then subsequently acting upon it, to justify 'the absence' in the practice of the class teacher (who is also the deputy head), even if only to myself.

*However, I also understand that as an experienced deputy head and Year 6 teacher, my mentor probably doesn't need such details on paper – she carries them with her in her head and the last minute nature of her planning; this is because she needs to know what the children are able to do today, before she plans what they will do tomorrow.*

The second point of significance relates to contexts. Class teachers, senior managers, student teachers etc. deal with contingency on a daily basis. They respond to individual needs, work through and despite contradictions and

tensions, and (to borrow Donald Rumsfeld's<sup>28</sup> infamous phraseology) manage an indeterminate number of known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns (Ezard, 2003). In doing so, they may be aware that what they 'end up with' is not quite 'best practice' but a diluted or 'contextually corrupted' version of it. This can leave the individual practitioner experiencing feelings of guilt, paranoia (fear or concern of being 'found out') and inadequacy (Ball, 2003). In this way, how teachers 'live with' best practice is via a process of constant negotiation and reflexive appraisals and reconfigurations of what it might mean or take to do their job well. The meaning of best practice thus becomes fractured and context bound. However, the absence continually haunts practitioners and whilst on a day-to-day basis this might evoke a pragmatic response of acceptance, at other times, for example when practice is scrutinised by those that inhabit a different context (arguably all others), realignment is necessary. For such an event, the extent to which meaning is context bound, is to be under-played. Ball, (2003) refers to this process as 'fabrication', a series of activities or practices that involves the careful selection and timely use of the correct signifiers. He states fabrications are;

...ways of presenting oneself within particular registers of meaning, within a particular economy of meaning in which only certain possibilities of being have value.

(2003:224)

In this way, best practice can be thought of as a sort of contextual performance, where student teachers and class teachers buy into a system of thought and enactment that both allows and requires them to play with the notion of best practice whilst at the same time being encumbered and restricted by it. I would argue that this contextual performance is the result of a 'best practice' discourse.

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<sup>28</sup> Donald Rumsfeld was the American Secretary of Defence from 2001 to 2006 under President George W. Bush. Speaking in 2003 about intelligence gathered to inform the defence of the U.S. against possible terrorist threats, he made the now infamous comment: 'Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns - the ones we don't know we don't know.' (Rumsfeld, cited in Ezard, 2003:online)

## **Conformity and difference**

The second conclusive judgement I draw as the observer in the first vignette is a concise evaluation of the quality of the class teacher's lesson in terms of the level of interest or excitement it is capable of generating for its participants. Whilst, I do not comment or evaluate it against its effectiveness in terms of the children's subsequent academic performance or the potential development of their writing skills, I do conclude that the lesson 'is dull'.

This summation points to another way I believe teaching and learning in the primary school has been shaped by the trajectory of more recent educational policy. I am not suggesting that all teaching is dull. I am not even suggesting that most or some of it is, or that the period of education reform documented in these chapters saw an increase in teaching that might be categorised as dull. The use of the word dull here, is, I believe, symbolic of a wider issue or concern. That is, issuing formulae for 'success' increases the potential for 'success' to become formulaic. Whilst I did issue a disclaimer at the beginning of this chapter, asserting that the vignettes were not horror stories of teaching, I do think that as far as the level of attention paid to the formula is concerned, the vignette presents an example of an extreme. I do not know how common the use of teaching scripts was, or is; only that they exist/existed and I have seen and experienced their use to varying degrees. It is interesting to note that within the vignette, I recount the level of difficulty the class teacher has in balancing (literally) herself between the script and a common classroom resource (the mini-whiteboard) – perhaps indicative of an unfamiliar task. The point I would like to make here is that, once a set of practices is sanctioned as being of worth and as the level to which that worth is described and prescribed gradually increases, inversely the possibility of something other potentially decreases. Such as it is, learning becomes a conformist process.

It is this conformity I believe engenders the evaluatory assessment of 'dull' in my third year student mind-set. The dullness is, I believe, not necessarily tied to the resources or the pedagogical choices suggested in the 'exemplar unit' (the name given to those units of work that have been additionally resourced



with scripts, texts, worksheets etc.), although it might well be argued that this is the case. (A closer inspection of the materials would be required here.) Rather, I believe I perceive the lesson as dull because of the ways in which the material limits the possibilities for something other than what is suggested to happen. If, like Davis et al. (cited in Roy, 2003), you hold the view that learning should be, or indeed is, unpredictable and uncertain, depending less on predetermined activity than on the veritable everyday 'going-ons' at various levels and at any given time, then it seems sensible, by extension, to suggest that inhibiting the potential for surprise, divergence and revelation (by following closely the predetermined structures, strategies and trajectories of a scripted lesson) undermines learning. Whether this is to a greater or lesser extent to the ways in which opportunities for learning are created by such high levels of prescription is, to my mind, an unanswerable question. For now, and for the purposes of this analysis, my only intention is to tentatively introduce the conceptual frameworks of difference and conformity, their relationship to one another and their possible consequences for teaching and learning.

I would also like to note here the potential to extend this line of thought. As illustrated by Britzman, the confines imposed by conformity and the effects of limiting the potential for 'something other' may infect not only the 'what' of teaching, but also the 'who'.

...conformity diminishes the prospects of becoming something other than what has been previously established. In this sense the forces of conformity are repressive.

(2003: 46)

Whilst this chapter of the thesis has served to illustrate the origins of my student self's perception of 'dullness' and its possible connection to the heightened level of prescription and intervention as a result of policy, I will, in Part 2, take up and examine in more detail the notions of teacher becoming, conformity and difference and their relation to the potential of, and in, student writing.

## Commentary on Vignette 2

By 2008 I had been a qualified teacher for just under four years. During this time I had worked as a class teacher in two schools, in two different local authorities. The latter of these positions as a Year 6 class teacher, I combined with leadership responsibilities for which I had secured a Teaching and Learning Responsibility<sup>29</sup> (TLR) point.

When telling stories about oneself, it always strikes me as a good idea to consider why, as a narrator of one's professional history (as in this instance) you choose to tell this story, above all others. In this case, whether the narrative and event are one in the same is a moot point, because the story is symbolic. My remembered version of this 'pre-SATs crisis meeting' crystallises a creeping, aggregated and cumulative sense I had in my role as a Year 6 class teacher/Senior Leader that my actions and my principles, were too far removed from one another for comfort. In my repertoire as a storyteller, this is why this narrative has become noteworthy. There are a couple of excerpts that are striking. I will deal with these first and speculate upon their significance in terms of the history of educational progress documented above.

### Processing products

The vignette offers an insight into a world of schooling that few would volunteer in describing an image of being a teacher that lured them into the profession in the first place.

*We spend some time sorting the children into those we think are unlikely to achieve, even with intervention, a level 4 and those who just might scrape through. The 'won't achieve' group will now spend each morning with our higher level teaching assistant.*

The crude process of deciding which children might 'make the grade' and which might not, is executed with callous precision. The event is business like. We sit around a table, documentation spread before us – we might as well be in a boardroom. As May draws ever closer (the calendar month in which primary

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<sup>29</sup> Please see glossary for a full explanation of the term under **Senior Leadership Team**.

school children take the SATs) the time for sentimentality and care have passed; the stakes are too high and the job at hand requires decisiveness – we need to sort the wheat from the chaff.

*As members of the Senior Leadership Team, we all know the gravity of the situation. In the past our results have led us to be 'of concern' to the local authority. We are due an Ofsted inspection and we are aware of rumours in the authority that we might be put into 'special measures': missing our level 4 targets, we believe, will seal our fate.*

Wyse et al. (2010) make an interesting observation vis-à-vis the legacy of the high stakes, pressurised working environment left behind by recent educational policy, seemingly exemplified here. Their view is that whilst teachers feel acutely the stress and pressure of their professional activities, mostly these orientate not around the concern of 'doing a good job' but '*being seen* to do a good job'. This conclusion epitomises the narrative account presented in Vignette 2. The intention of the meeting is not to discuss children's learning needs. Rather we are driven by the need to validate ourselves as 'good' in the eyes of others, using the measurements of success imposed on us to do so.

The actions described in the vignette present a powerful image – an embodiment of what might be referred to as 'the neo-liberal concern'; that is, the extent to which the discursive philosophical, economic and political doctrines of the 'new right' (Olssen et al., 2004) have 'remade' the world of education (Robertson, 2008). The vignette can be seen as exemplifying Foucault's notion of governmentality – the means by which the discursive manifestations of state-authored moves of power and control become inscribed in the subject. Foucault describes this state intervention as including;

...modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that [are] destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the field of action of others.

(Foucault, 1994:341, cited in Davies and Bansel, 2007)

The field of action presented in the vignette is clearly structured for both the visible participants (the Senior Leadership Team) as well as the less visible – the children. The framework provided is derived from the policy shifts resultant of the political, social and economic context detailed above. It is interesting to

note the extent to which we have taken up the discourses offered by neo-liberalism in our assessment of the children we teach. Of the pursuit of a self-regulating free market, Robertson writes, '[we] must turn human beings and nature into products to be bought and sold... that is, [we] must commodify them' (2008:19). I would suggest that it is to situations such as the one described in Vignette 2, that writers and researchers that identify and challenge the neo-liberalisation of education (such as; Ball, 1990, 2003 & 2008; Davies and Bansel, 2007; Olssen et al., 2004 and Robertson, 2008) might point to in justifying and defending their concerns and claims. The children in the story are dehumanised, their individual qualities and identities buried beneath an essentially arbitrary measure of their success as learners. Stronach et al. (2002) note the depth of penetration of this kind of audit-led register in the everyday working lives, and summations thereof, of primary school teachers, claiming that children are 'redefined' within a 'new and arcane professional discourse' (2002:121) and discursive framework flowing from children's tests results through to school reputations and the identification of the professional development needs of those that contribute towards it. As players in the state game of governmentality, the 'professional discourse' aids us in our endeavours to divide and process the children according to their ability to contribute to 'figures' that will allow us, as a school, to function in a market place that has been created for and by us.

### **Professional tension and conflict**

As well as focussing on the more striking aspects of the vignette, I would also like to offer some consideration of the utterances left unsaid and the 'inactions' that haunt the scene presented. Whilst there is every chance that after the event described, and possibly during, I cried out silently (internally) to challenge or rage against my newly forming managerial self, the vignette doesn't readily offer, implicitly or explicitly, a statement of objection to the events that unfold. Indeed, the retelling is quite matter of fact, much in the same way as I remember the event – *'this is what needed to be done and this*

*is how we did it.*' I would like to venture a possible cause for this effect that posits an explanation of affect for the historicity of progress offered in this chapter of the thesis.

In their research into teacher professionalism Stronach et al. claim the professional self as 'disparate allegiances ...a series of tensions and dilemmas that frame the identity of the professional as implementer of policy' (2002:109). This 'disparate' version of professionalism is a response to a constant act of 'juggling' between what the authors refer to as 'economies of performance' and 'ecologies of practice'. Economies of performance are described as generally taking the form of a quantitative register of desirable attributes such as 'quality', 'effectiveness' and 'outcomes'. These attributes are defined within the parameters of an audit culture and are 'real' insofar as their effects are experienced and lived in terms of 'subsequent resource allocation, reputation and the ways in which institutions and individuals act' (2002:132). Ecologies of practice is used to refer to the version of professionalism constructed to a greater degree from 'inside' oneself; where professional values are constructed internally based on loyalties, beliefs and idealised 'selves'. These often competing notions of what it means to be a professional ensure that the practitioner is continually caught up in a series of tensions – living with and responding to these tensions are defined as 'professional moments'. Being a teacher therefore becomes more than a unitary construct – it is not one thing, but a series of lived responses to the in betwixt world of teaching and learning. One of the ways in which teachers manage this response is to use identity as a tool (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion on identity), calling forth shards of a fractured and disparate sense of professional self, as needed.

I would like to suggest that whilst not immediately visible as a site of conflict or tension, this may well be as a result of a well-rehearsed form of professionalism, where I, the inscribed subject (if only subconsciously) make the most of my compartmentalised professional self, calling up the version of self needed to navigate the treacherous terrain that has been set before us. The expressions of professionalism that might well have seen me stand up and

*cry 'these tests are utter nonsense. Do away with them I say... they are only harming them and us!'* is quietened down, for use another day, or place or space. It is not my intention to draw conclusions about the merit or madness of this approach, rather, just to suggest that the story of educational progress told in this chapter of the thesis impacts upon selves and lives, and to conjecture what this lived effect might be. Here we see that the saturated policy landscape may well have the (probably unintended) effect of (further) fracturing the professional identities of teachers and/or allowing them the opportunity to work the relational aspects of their identity as a tool for coping with and managing the fluctuating and varied demands of their professional work.

As this part of the thesis is drawing to a close, it makes sense to take stock of where this nomadic journey has taken us thus far. In this chapter, I have detailed something of the political, social and cultural movements that have worked to shape the lives and practices of teachers in recent history. In doing so, I have attempted to 'transcend the individual/social divide' (Davies and Gannon, 2005:318) by attending to the exteriority of the teacher (or student teacher) as subject. The fruits of this labour will be borne out more fully in the chapters that follow. For example, in Chapter 7 I return to the themes of conformity and difference in attempting to understand the responses of one student who participated in the empirical phase of the research project. Similarly, in Chapter 8 I consider the impact of the regulation of teaching and learning on the students' ability and willingness to resist the temptation of resorting to the essential realism of the teaching and learning encounter.

In their totality, the first five chapters that have made up Part 1 of the thesis have constituted a sustained attempt to understand and explain the what, how and why of student teacher writing. In doing so, I have been careful to ensure that whilst engaging with the processes of analysis, mythological exposure and historical contextualisation, I have avoided reducing the complexity of student writing to a set of confinable problems and 'off-the self' solutions. I have also attempted to make clear something of the methodological and theoretical frameworks that guide my thinking and actions as a researcher.

In the next part of the thesis these themes and endeavours continue albeit with a tighter focus on practice, in that I explain and analyse the types of events and happenings more readily associated with teacher (educator) practitioner research in specific relation to how writing is and can be used by students and teacher educators as a tool for professional learning. There is, for example, a more sustained engagement with data; the data collected as a result of a series of pedagogical experiments I initiated – off-shoots of thinking with and about student writing in relation to Deleuzo-Guattarian poststructuralist theory. I also work to further enact Deleuzian concepts as a philosophy of use in my own writing. As a result, Part 2 of the thesis; 'How might writing be used as a tool for learning?' is sometimes presented in ways which intentionally aim to unsettle my (your) disposition as a researcher/writer. As a whole, it can be read as an attempt to reflect my growing belief in the Deleuzo-Guattarian principle, that;

...when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into; must be plugged into, in order to work.

Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.

(1987/2004:5)

## Part 2: How might writing be used as a tool for learning?



# Chapter 6: Methodology

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## Preamble to Part 2

In this, the second part of my thesis, I intend to map the various avenues I have explored in my attempts to develop what I might refer to as rhizomatic praxis. This praxis is not confined to pedagogy. In Chapter 4, I outlined two key ways in which I imagined that Deleuzian theory might be put to work in what Gale (2007) refers to as a 'philosophy of use'. The first of these would concern my own writing. In remaining cognisant of my original intent of exposing and then actively subverting some of the well-established writing myths outlined and discussed in detail in chapters 2 and 3, I intend to use some of the chapters that follow to experiment with the written research form, in order to, as Roy explains; 'challenge the inner authority of our selective procedures and boundary constructs that exclude other ways of looking' (2003:88).

Pedagogically; whilst, as discussed in earlier chapters, the pragmatic constraints of my research have meant that I cannot redesign courses, or even units within courses, I have been free to invent new ways of organising and delivering teaching activities. In consultation with my line manager, it was agreed that as long as any adaptations included no alterations to pre-established unit outcomes and did not impair students' ability to achieve these, the process by which they were arrived at, could be altered. The remainder of the thesis will therefore be given over in the first instance, to describing and evaluating some of the praxiological adjustments I have made with the intention of developing practices within my own work as a teacher educator that I might describe as more sympathetic to a Deleuzian conceptualisation of learning and writing. Following on from this, and drawing on the work of other Deleuzian scholars for inspiration, I will attempt to write a rhizome; mindful of the need to move beyond 'simply re-inscribing the old methodology with [a] new language' (Mazzei and McCoy, 2010: 504).

## **A qualitative methodology**

Before detailing the context of my praxiological tinkering, it is important to outline the methodology I have adopted to service this investigation. It may well be no surprise to the reader that the overarching framework for the research is qualitative. As already indicated in Part 1 I have, for some time, been theoretically invested in the mode of thinking, style of philosophising and kind of writing (Peters, 1999) characterised as poststructuralism. Although I have already made reference to several of these facets in Part 1, I will attempt to draw a more detailed picture here of the ways in which this paradigmatic choice has been described in the literature and applied in others' interpretations of the research form. I will return to this later. For now however, I would like to begin by laying the methodological foundations for the thesis as whole, and, I feel, a good place to begin in this endeavour, is through a discussion of qualitative research. Having never worked within a quantitative framework and being schooled so thoroughly in the crafts of narrative, phenomenology and reflective practice as a student myself, I would probably not describe adopting a qualitative methodology as a choice per se, more of a way of living and seeing the world which I have found I have been both unwilling and unable to extricate myself from.

The research I have designed and will detail in this part of the thesis is intentioned to attend specifically to interpretations of the culture, practice, purpose and potential of and in student writing. In doing so, the research conforms to the kinds of definitions offered in the literature of qualitative enterprises. For example, whilst admitting that qualitative research is difficult to define due to the 'embarrassment of choices' it offers and the contingency of its meaning on context, Denzin and Lincoln, offer the following:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make that world visible.

(2000:3)

Hammersley furthers this with an explication of how the process of rendering the social world 'visible' might be achieved. To do so, research of a qualitative nature;

...tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis.

(2013:12)

These features are all evident in my own research design not because I intended to fashion a qualitative 'end product', but because the form of enquiry and nature of the enquiry necessitated such an approach. Consequently, my choice of methodology can be seen as arising not only from the chosen area of enquiry but also as a result of the ways in which I have come to see and understand the world as detailed in Part 1. This twofold process is affirmed by Somekh et al. (2005) as the basis for most of the methodological choices researchers make. Whilst I have detailed quite extensively in Part 1, the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpinned and guided my research endeavours, I have not yet made clear my case for the choice of enquiry necessitating a qualitative approach. In making this argument, my first reason is the subjectivity of writing as an enterprise. Whilst it may be true that, should I have wished to, I could have chosen to 'code' the responses participants offered as a consequence or in evaluation of the pedagogical activities I designed, to do so would have been to constrain and even silence the varied and personal nature of the approaches, concerns and opportunities arising from the project that the individuals involved experienced. Allowing this to happen would have severely limited the scope and vigour of the project. This is because the way any person approaches the task of writing, whether that be a researcher, academic, student or school pupil, is individual. It is based on and deeply connected to notions of self and identity and to negate this, by coding responses, and therefore blotting out the individuals who opted to participate in the project would, I believe, have been harmful to the overall intent of the research project.

Secondly, and related to the first point; writing, and one's experience of it, is primarily an individual and subjective experience and is therefore an activity of interpretation. (This facet of writing was explored in Chapter 2.) As such, a qualitative approach is necessitated as 'interpretation' can only be accessed via engagement with individuals and by being attentive to the quality and not category or quantity of their responses. Finally, and again, as already alluded to above, and in much greater detail in Part 1 of this thesis, is the preoccupation with culture. Writing, and specifically student teacher writing within the university, is a cultural product and process. It is bound up in the cultural norms and myths of the institutions it services. It is moulded and shaped; contingent on the contexts in which it is experienced. Any study of writing therefore is the study of the culture and context in which that writing occurs: the study of culture and context is a qualitative undertaking.

Having then outlined the reasons for 'choosing' a qualitative approach to the research, it seems prudent to outline some of the advantages and finer details of working in this way. To do so I would like to employ Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) metaphor of qualitative research as montage.

Montage can be defined as the technique of selecting, editing and combining in a single composition, elements from various sources. This process is intended to either give the impression that the pieces coexist as part of a broader whole and, as such, form a new primary image or message (which often only reveals its smaller constitutive parts upon closer inspection), or, to allow the separate images to take on or produce new messages or understandings in relation to one another whilst retaining their distinctive and separate identities. Both 'methods' however share the same ultimate purpose and that is to create something new through the process of blending together, overlapping and connecting varied fragments of material that in some way represent and so, interpret, the world. The basis for the metaphor thus far is, I think, self-explanatory. Montage, in a similar way to qualitative research, is fundamentally concerned with creating something anew from the careful arrangement of various sources. This process allows for something new to be said, either about

each fragment of data or material in its own right, or as a result of its relationship to a broader theme or issue. The role of the researcher is also apparent. The montage is a creation and so requires a creator. The idea then that a different image could have been created should the researcher/creator/artist have intended it, or should the fragments have been left in the hands of another looms large, although the researcher/creator may choose (consciously or otherwise) to obscure their role or purposefully draw attention to it. These are the qualities of quantitative research. However, Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) use of the montage metaphor allows us to further this conceptualisation by introducing and articulating something of the relationship between the montage (the research), the creator/artist (the researcher) and the viewer (the reader). They explain this as follows:

Montage invites the viewer to construct interpretations that build on one another as the scene unfolds. These interpretations are built on associations based on the contrasting images that blend into one another. The underlying assumption of the montage is that the viewer's perceive and interpret the shots in a "montage sequence and not sequentially, or one at a time, but rather simultaneously" (Cook, 1981, p. 172). The viewer puts the sequences together into a meaningful emotional whole, as if in a glance, all at once.

(2000:4)

Montages then, are dialogic. They necessitate an active audience. I would like to argue that for a qualitatively orientated thesis this is also and necessarily the case. Indeed, as a reader of my own writing I feel my identity fragment somewhat further as the research text (this thesis) interpolates me as the viewer nearly as often as it requires me to be the writer/creator. In viewing the research I am called upon to make sense of it as a whole, a process that requires active engagement because to take each fragment as a singularity does not do justice to the whole, yet the whole is too complex and intricate to be taken in all at once and so, to do so, evokes a reader that is called upon as an individual, to make a certain sense of the text they are presented with. This quality of qualitative research, as described by Denzin and Lincoln (ibid.) I find particularly intriguing because it speaks of the delicate and multilateral relationship between writing (both as research and indeed more generally) and

those that read it, a concern central to a thesis that focusses on students' production of assessed writing fated to be read and judged by their tutor. As a result of this intrigue, much of what follows in this part of the thesis draws upon, in much finer detail, the participation of the reader and the ways in which they are implicated in the process of 'consuming' textual material. This 'qualitative complication' is taken up in the following chapter.

Whilst I appreciate the montage metaphor has it uses (it has allowed me to introduce and discuss some of the qualities of qualitative research here), in the chapters that follow, I also undertake something of a critique of the montage 'formula', in particular the 'arrangement of sources' by a creator/artist/researcher. This critique is realised through a presentation and enactment of troubling conventional notions of data. In the montage metaphor above, data are imagined as passive material to be arranged at the whim and fancy of a 'creator' in order to furnish their need for interpretive work. Any dialogue is assumed to include only the researcher and the reader of the work.

Drawing on contemporary scholars such as Mazzei (2012, 2013), St. Pierre (2013) and Koro-Ljungberg and MacLure (2013), in the chapters that follow, but particularly in chapters 8, 9 and 10, I work to develop a notion of data and researchers as entangled and co-implicated in the production of knowledge. Here then, rather than data being thought of as dormant, it is conceived of as having an active role in the research project or the creation of montage. In other words, it becomes part of the dialogue – the conversation includes the researcher and the reader as well as the data or research material.

### **Analytical and theoretical framework – Poststructuralism**

In outlining the features of qualitative research both Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Hammersley (2013) are keen to stress the difficulty in singularly defining what is a complex network of theories, which are articulated in varied ways according to research and researcher. For instance, in attempting to draw out broader more flexible definitions, Hammersley (ibid.) opts to loosely frame

qualitative research by detailing a series of research projects that exemplify some of its characteristics. Denzin and Lincoln's approach is to locate the qualitative movement as a paradigm shifting and reshaping itself through a series of 'moments in history'. One of Denzin and Lincoln's 'moments', entitled 'A Triple Crisis' details the emergence of poststructural and postmodern discourses – the tripartite crisis referring to representation, legitimation and praxis (2000:17). These crises can be crudely explained as follows: As a moment in the history of qualitative research, the postmodern and poststructural epoch defines a point where confidence in the promises of qualitative research as detailed above is shaken. Questions are posed as to what extent social experience is created by the text that was originally thought to merely 'represent' it. This is Crisis 1/representation. In response, the boundaries of what constitutes research are purposefully loosened, broadening the scope and so inciting debate as to what might be considered 'legitimate' research. This is Crisis 2/legitimation. Finally, given crises 1 and 2, it follows that the role and purpose of both research and the researcher are called into question. How the research community might choose to respond demands a reformulation of praxis (Crisis 3).

Whilst the 'emergence' of poststructuralism and postmodernism might be reducible to a series of crises, as 'a movement of thought' over time (Peters, 1999: online) they offer researchers much more than what the somewhat nihilistic representation of a collection of crises might suggest. I would like to detail something of this 'offer' here. Before I do so however, I think a final foray into definitions is required. As the reader, you may have noticed that in the chapters that precede this one, I have used the term 'poststructural' (and its derivatives) often. I have not however used the term 'postmodern'. This is because, unlike Lather (1991), a prolific writer of and within the postmodern/structural paradigm, I do not use the two terms interchangeably. This, I admit, is not wholly due to any particular theoretical position I hold. I have no serious qualms or reservations concerning the conflation of post-structuralism/modernism, as some scholars do (Grossberg, cited in Lather,

1991:4). It is rather, at least partly due to the order in which I encountered the theory. I became interested in 'poststructuralism', signposted as such in the methodological texts I encountered. It was only later in my scholarly endeavours that I realised its close relationship to postmodernism. This was perhaps an academic blessing, as it has allowed me to create something of a distinction between the two terms that has, at the very least, allowed me to avoid confusing myself any more than is necessary. This distinction, albeit a blurry one, and as articulated by St. Pierre and Pillow (2000), denotes 'postmodernism' as the wider cultural movement/shift encompassing and borne out in the arts, architecture, popular culture and so on. 'Poststructuralism' however, refers more specifically to the 'academic theorizing and critique' (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000) associated with the postmodern movement. This distinction accounts for at least some of the absence of postmodernism in the thesis thus far. I have been engaged in academic theorising and so, the term 'poststructuralism' seemed most apt. Obviously, abiding by such a definition is a personal choice and therefore, and to confuse matters somewhat, in attempting to explain poststructuralism, I will draw on a range of scholars who choose otherwise.

In attempting to make further sense of what poststructuralism might offer the researcher, a good place to start is Lyotard's 'The Postmodern Condition.' Lyotard uses the term 'modern' to designate any science that 'makes an explicit appeal to some grand narrative' (1984, cited in Cheek and Gough, 2005: 302). He also states that, 'simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity towards metanarratives' (ibid.). The metanarrative has been explained elsewhere in this thesis (please see Chapter 3) but it is worth repeating here. A metanarrative, grand narrative or master narrative is 'a privileged discourse capable of situating, characterizing, and evaluating all other discourses' (Fraser and Nicholson, cited in St. Pierre, 2000:508). In other words, it is a set of structures, artefacts and practices that work to define the way of things. Poststructuralism on the other hand is 'skeptical and incredulous about the possibility of such metanarratives' (Cherryholmes, 1988, cited in



Cheek and Gough, 2005: 302) – there is no ‘way of things’. This is because fundamentality the social world is too complex, messy and contradictory for there to be any single answer or way to see, explain or experience it. The role of the poststructuralist philosopher thus becomes twofold. In the first instance, identifying and exposing the ‘grand narrative’; or, in the words of Davies and Gannon seeking to;

...find [the] ways in which the social worlds we inhabit, and the possibilities for existence within them, are actively spoken into existence.

(2005:318)

In doing so, a second objective is achieved, that is, loosening the grand narrative’s grip on the world and the people in it, so that alternatives may be experienced. In these pursuits, St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) identify the scholars, theorists and philosophers that might either be of use to the researcher/writer, or indeed, broadly categorise one’s work as poststructuralist in nature. These theorists include, but are not limited to; Gilles Deleuze, Deleuze and Felix Guattari<sup>30</sup>, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. All of which, and to varying extents I have made reference to in this thesis. In exploring, advocating, designing or experiencing alternatives to grand narratives, the task of remaining vigilant and guarding against the folly of replacing one regime of truth with another is the constant burden of the poststructural scholar. As Miller et al. (2005) light-heartedly note, poststructuralism ‘is the last word for last words’.

This whole (poststructuralist) process requires a keen focus on discourse and discursive and regulatory practices. St. Pierre (2000), in her exposition of poststructural thought gives a detailed account of what this ‘keen focus’ might constitute and the tools a researcher might employ in framing their project/writing/thinking poststructurally. There is not space to account for all the possibilities here; the list that St. Pierre offers is too extensive. The philosophical concepts dealt with include language, discourse, power, resistance

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<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that some critics, for example De Landa (2002), reject the categorisation of Deleuze and Guattari as poststructuralists because they contest the idea that discourse takes priority over matter or reality. Nevertheless, following St. Pierre and Pillow (2000), I will continue to include them in my list of poststructuralist writers due to their belonging to the continental philosophical tradition of critiquing notions of representation and the humanist subject.

and freedom, knowledge and truth and the subject. However, in a similar way to Hammersley's (2013) approach to 'not' defining qualitative research (referred to above), I would hope that I will, and already have, exemplified how these philosophical concepts might be made use of in a poststructural critique throughout the thesis. For instance, in Chapter 1 I discuss knowledge and truth and how they might be understood in ways that disrupt the deep seated humanist tendency to conceptualise them as commodities capable of being captured 'once and for all'. Similarly, in Chapter 3 I unfold an extended narrative on 'the subject', situating it finally as too fragmented and transitory to be thought of in unified and coherent ways, although, nonetheless, capable of exerting agency. These are instances of what I would deem poststructural encounters and the remainder of the thesis will continue in the same vein. In doing so, I hope that some of the finer points and uses of a poststructuralist paradigm will emerge in due course.

### **Practitioner Action Research**

Whilst both the qualitative and poststructural nature of my work might be described as organic and more 'emergent' than structured, the final methodological quality I attend to here, that of action research, is probably less so. What I hope has been clear is that the project I have undertaken, even in its widest sense, is practitioner research orientated, in that the focus of my study has been the work that I undertake with student teachers in my professional capacity as a teacher educator. In the chapters that follow, this practitioner research will merge into something of an action research project, albeit one with rather loosely defined parameters. This is because in attempting to respond to the research questions I posed for the purpose of this thesis, i.e. 'How might writing be used as a tool for learning?' and 'How might I, as a teacher educator, make the process of writing one of value for the students that I teach?', I wanted to try my hand at experimenting with alternatives to the models and practices outlined in Chapter 2. In Kemmis and McTaggart's (2000) account of the varied forms and purposes of action research, the 'type'

most befitting the project I undertake and explain further in this part of the thesis is 'classroom action research'. This form of research typically involves class teachers using qualitative modes of enquiry to make judgments about and improvements to their own practice. It has increasingly however, been applied similarly by university tutors to do the same (Noffke and Somekh, 2005). Essentially, the move towards action research on my part here signals an interest in realising Deleuzo-Guattarian poststructural theory as a philosophy of use through pedagogy, as I describe in Chapter 4.

Whilst much of the literature on action research has a strong emphasis on the methodological implications of working within a practitioner researcher paradigm, there is often also a strong message regarding the philosophical underpinnings of the approach. In the main, this message is one of principle and it is concerned with both the 'who' and the 'what' of educational research. Firstly, I will deal with the 'who'. As the name suggests, practitioner action research is conducted by and for the practitioner. In the historical trajectory of the social sciences, this is a marked departure, as research was often conducted by an 'outsider' who observed and attempted to understand the lives/work/relations etc. of a community to which they did not belong. In this sense, research was done 'to' and not 'by' its participants. As McNiff (2002) suggests, this form of research was and is regarded by proponents of practitioner action research as 'a distortion of the values of democracy and respect for others' (2002:21). This is because to subject participants to research done to and on their behalf, without their direct involvement, is to disregard or underplay their capacities to know, judge, evaluate or enhance their own lives/work/relations and those of the communities to which they belong or constitute. Practitioner action research readdresses this imbalance. Status, power and the capacity to understand and change situations, is given back to 'participants' as they research their own lives/work/relations.

The second organising principle of practitioner action research concerns the 'what' of research or, in other words, its purpose. Whilst it may well be that in researching a problem, organisation, practice or indeed, ourselves, we come to

know that object under study in more depth; for the action researcher, this is not enough. Rather research of value should demonstrate the capacity to effect change. It must produce something. For Somekh, a key advocate of action research and a prolific writer on its uses and outcomes, this defining principle of practitioner action research is, or should be, the starting point for any project. She writes:

Action research starts from a vision of social transformation... [action researchers] construct themselves as agents able to access the mechanisms of power in a social group or institution and influence the nature and direction of change.

(2002:7)

In terms of the project I present in this thesis, the principled basis for practitioner action research is an easy fit with the trajectory of my own research. Working within a large institution it is not always as easy to effect change as one might like. Systems and structures can often thwart intentions for transformation. However, as already described in earlier chapters, this does not render the practitioner powerless. 'Soft changes' to one's practice are relatively easy to effect. They allow practitioners to work from the principled basis as set out above and whilst they may not immediately present themselves as having the capacity to 'transform' at an institutional level, the ripple effect of these changes might well see transformation occur in more subtle, quiet ways, that may well afford more sustainability. This discussion, of the implications of 'soft change', will be taken up further in Chapter 11.

Building on its founding principles, practitioner action research has a detailed and clear methodological grounding for researchers to work with, although there are many variations in how this is articulated. When discussing methodological issues with students, I find that this clarity in methodology is often seen as one of action research's main attractions. Novice or 'part-time' researchers (for example masters students who are researching their practice as classroom teachers whilst maintaining full-time teaching commitments) very often explain that they find the structure of action research and the detail and specificity available in research texts about how to organise projects useful.

This structure is often expressed as a cyclical or staged process. Lewin (1988, cited in Noffke and Somekh, 2005) for example divides action research into a series of stages. The first of these is reconnaissance. This initial stage involves the researcher identifying key features of the social group or practices under study. This process leads to a second stage of data collection and analysis. From here, hypotheses can be formulated regarding potential problems or concerns in the functioning of the object/objects under study and possible resolutions conjectured. These resolutions are actualised as forms of action, which are planned based on theoretical insights garnered from self-study and further analysis of the context or setting for the project. The next stage of Lewin's action research process consists of testing your hypothesis/hypotheses and finally the validity of the hypotheses is established via evaluation of the actions implemented (Somekh, 2006). Whilst Lewin does not suggest or present this process as simple or straight forward, other examples of staged action research methodologies have attended to the complexity of action research by building complication into their research models. For example, McNiff's (1988) spiral model where smaller spirals of action, evaluation/reflection and modification branch outwards from the main line of enquiry. Regardless of which model you choose, should you find it useful, a structure exists for researchers to map their research activities onto and to guide them as their project evolves.

Whilst the literature on action research often emphasises the structure and/or stages of action research, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) explain that in reality, these seemingly self-contained stages may not be as neat and orderly as they might appear on paper. Inevitably, the process will be more fluid and open as the teacher/teacher educator responds to situations as and when they arise. This was definitely the case for my research and so whilst I will crudely outline something of the various elements of research activity that constituted my project here, it will become clear that they do not easily fit into a neat typology of stages or cycles. In explaining the design of the study, it is important

therefore, to acknowledge the rather organic nature of my research project. This task will be undertaken in the following and final section of this chapter.

Whilst it may not fit into stages or cycles, I believe my research still has what I would describe as an 'action research quality'. In the main, this is because I believe my project shares the principled basis for practitioner action research. I like to describe this state of affairs as 'praxis' which Noffke (cited in Somekh) describes as follows;

The practical implications of critical thought, the continuous interplay between doing something and revising our thought about what ought to be done.

(2006:13)

The dynamic relationship between thinking and doing is played out, although in different ways, in each of the chapters that follow.

## **Design of the study**

The setting for the study has been partially described already in Part 1, but I will add to it here. Although the research conducted was not confined to one particular unit or group of students, the data collected, including session and interview transcripts, as well as examples of students' writing were all derived from activities associated with my role as Unit Tutor. This meant that for all participants involved in the study, I acted as their immediate point of contact for all unit related matters over the duration of the academic year. I led teaching sessions, conducted tutorials and marked all assessed items.

In addition, the study was located exclusively within the Teaching Studies element of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme. Teaching Studies is best described as 'a strand' of the ITE programmes. The tutor team design and deliver units across various ITE programmes. Students enrolled on the BA Primary programme for example, will participate in several Teaching Studies units over the duration of their studies, with at least one unit being undertaken each academic year. Teaching Studies has a distinctive character. The units are

predominantly concerned with allowing students the opportunity to develop individual interests and respond to concerns and quandaries that the practical elements of the course highlight for them. Pedagogically there is a strong philosophy of collaboration and dialogic exchange which, over the course of their studies students gradually come to recognise as the 'Teaching Studies style'. For this reason, it seemed sensible to focus my research on students that were in the final stages of their teacher education. All the data referred to in this part of the thesis is therefore derived from my work with final year, undergraduate students, as it seemed sensible to conclude that this group would be most familiar with the working practices of the unit.

For final year students, seminars begin after they have completed their school-based training placement, usually of seven or eight weeks in duration. During the placement students are expected to keep a reflective journal. The journal should be added to as and when the students feel it appropriate, although there is some guidance offered before the school placement begins which suggests possible triggers for writing. As a result of this guidance, and indeed the practise students have had in completing reflective journals over the four years of the course, journal entries usually take the form of reflective narrative accounts of moments in the placement that sparked their curiosity, caused concern or demonstrate some of the everyday difficulties of learning to teach. Students know that they will be required to share the reflective accounts they produce with their peers. This is another substantial element of the taught unit and a stronger feature in their final year than they will have been used to in previous years' study. The students are asked to arrange themselves into small groups which remain constant throughout the series of seminar sessions. The idea being that the groups, known as Action Learning Sets, act as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and so, through regular interaction, students engage in a process of collective learning through support, challenge, critique, questioning and so on.

The journal entries are used by the groups as a stimulus for identifying and considering in depth, aspects of their practice or professional (and sometimes personal) selves they value, desire to modify or to understand further.

The following extract from the unit handbook, explains to the students something of the unit's philosophy and practices.

The range of experiences that are associated with this unit – activities undertaken as part of your school based training, the sessions themselves, the Learning Journal, Action Learning Sets, as well as the process of assessment – are purposefully designed to emphasise the importance of personalising your own learning and support you in doing so. This should afford you the opportunities to consider the ways in which your own professional identity continues to emerge and be re-shaped. There will be:

- a sustained focus on improving learning and teaching;
- a clear focus on your daily or routine practices, since it is where change is most difficult but also most likely to be needed;
- an emphasis on the sharing of experience through working together in small teams;
- a focus on how to go about making small incremental changes not on tips or quick fixes;
- the opportunity to choose the practices you want to change and the techniques you use;
- a learning environment that emphasises high challenge as well as high support.

(Manchester Metropolitan University: 2013)

Whilst not confined to a particular timescale or duration, the majority of the data collection for the thesis happened over two academic years.

### **The first year/Cycle One: 2010 – 2011**

Details of the project were shared with the group of twenty-eight students during the first of eleven taught sessions and before any data was collected. It



was made clear that whilst the outcomes of the unit would remain as specified for the wider cohort, pedagogically the group should expect to see differences between their own experiences of the unit and those of their peers outside of the immediate group. It was also explained that the project was the basis of my doctoral research. All of the students were asked to complete consent forms (please see Appendix B), which made clear that involvement might see the reproduction of their writing and/or contributions in sessions or interviews in publications and papers disseminated to a wider audience. The consent forms also including an option for the participants to choose whether their name appears in any research outputs associated with the project. Those participants who chose to have their name used and so their contribution to the project recognised, have been referred to in the data by their surname and first initial. All other participants have been anonymised using initials (e.g. 'Student J'). All but two students gave their consent. Data was gathered through both the normal teaching and learning activities associated with the unit and a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with two Action Learning Sets: eight students in total. Two rounds of interviews were held; one during the course of the unit and one after it ended and just before graduation. The intention was to allow the students to comment on the success or otherwise of the project both whilst the unit was running, but also again once the majority of their studies had been completed and they had taken the opportunity for some well-deserved rest and recuperation.

### **The second year/Cycle Two: 2011 – 2012**

As with the previous year, information about the project was shared with the students during the first taught session/seminar. Consent forms were distributed and I explained that participation was voluntary and might involve the recording and reproduction of both their verbal contributions to sessions as well as their written work both within my thesis and any publications I might derive from it. All twenty-four students in the group agreed to the terms of participation and signed the consent forms.

The remaining chapters constitute an analysis (of sorts) of some of the data gathered over this two year period.

### **Methodological issues**

Whilst much of the activities or 'soft changes' that constitutes the action research element of my project were purposefully designed and based on principles derived from a Deleuzian methodology (and the culmination of the second stage of Lewin's, 1988, four stage process described above), much of what occurred during seminars was also necessarily responsive to the ways in which I perceived student needs and these were not always foreseen. For example, Chapter 8 recounts a teaching episode in which I attempted to exemplify a process called implicated reading to a seminar group. (The process of 'implicated reading' was a form of 'action' I designed resulting from previous data collection and analysis detailed in Part 1 of this thesis. A more detailed explanation of what 'implicated reading' constitutes will be provided in the following chapter.) Whilst the teaching session was planned, it had not been my original intention to provide such a detailed (and long) exemplar of what an 'implicated read' might look like. Indeed, I had not done so for the previous year's cohort where I had first tried out implicated reading as a method for encouraging alternative writing practices. The impetus for the session was a series of small, undocumented and often anecdotal reflections upon exchanges within teaching sessions and beyond, from which I concluded that a working example might be helpful in encouraging the students to replicate the method within their own writing practice. This, often spontaneous, responsiveness became an ingrained feature of the project. Whilst adjustments based on the evaluation of previous activity might well reflect the cyclical structure of action research, I did not consciously perceive or later describe the above teaching session as an additional 'cycle' of an on-going action research project. Indeed, over time and as my concept of the project shifted the vocabulary of 'cycles' came to mean little more than the academic year in which the data was produced. This was, and is, largely due to the amalgamation of the various approaches (qualitative, poststructuralist, action research) I have adopted as

well as my commitment to ensuring that I also attempted the kind of alternative writing practices I was encouraging the students to engage with. This came to bear both in the activity of making pedagogical adjustments but probably most discernibly in the writing up of the research findings in the chapters that follow. In doing so, I wanted to adopt a more poststructuralist, Deleuzo-Guattarian approach; to refuse to produce a text that can be read in simplistic, linear and incontrovertible ways (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). As a result, the cycles or stages of action research, whilst vaguely reflective of the activities I designed, delivered and modified in the university classroom, are not a prominent feature in the design and organisation of the chapters that follow.

Another prominent methodological issue I grappled with was the lack of distinct parameters to the project. The lines between the research and my everyday activity as a teacher educator were often irrecoverably blurred. This slippery nature of the project, whilst probably an inevitable by-product of the practitioner action research form, did generate some additional and unforeseen complications. As the ripple effect of my research ensured that Deleuzian praxis infected more and more of my teaching practice, it became increasingly difficult to discern what was and what was not 'part of the project'. As a consequence of course, a huge amount of data was generated which was often in addition to the initial activities I had designed for the students to participate in. In the resulting decision of what to include and what to omit in the process of 'data analysis', I concluded that a range of sources would best serve to capture some of this variety. The following chapters therefore draw on interview transcripts, teaching session transcripts and student writing.

Finally, as with any practitioner research project, there are of course consequences and implications of occupying a position where one is both, and all at once, teacher/tutor and researcher. This dilemma is well documented in research texts which identify the key issue as one of power. As Somekh et al. (2005) point out; power differentials are a feature of most, if not all types of research. Of course, the extent and ways in which they are played out depends upon the nature of the relationship between research and researcher. In the

case of this research I, as the researcher, was in close contact with the participants and it might be argued in a position of authorial power as the participants' Unit Tutor. In such a situation, questions about whether the participants felt pressurised (either consciously or subconsciously) to act, write and respond in certain ways during activities designated as 'research' loom large. Were the outcomes of the research tainted by the student/tutor relationship that categorised my research efforts? This is a good question and one that needs a response. However, there are a plethora of similar and additional questions that could be asked and also therefore, similarly require a response. This is because a variety of social positionings have the potential to impact upon power differentials and ultimately therefore the quality and nature of the data collected, whether that be data originating from interview or from any other of the potential sites for the collection of empirical evidence. Barbour and Schostak (2005) for example, state that depending upon the context of the social arrangements in which interviews or other data collection activities are embedded, any, or all, of the following structures, status categories or positionings has the potential to affect and/or shape the data: culture, gender, ethnicity, economy and religion. I would add to that age, status and role. Attending to all the ways in which these social categories might shape the data collection process is a sizable undertaking.

My response to these tensions needs therefore to 'look beyond' the immediacy or specific characteristics of the problem, tension or dilemma created by these different facets of social positionings and instead look to the wider philosophical concern of conducting 'in-house' qualitative practitioner research. In doing so, I would like to raise two key points. Firstly, as Somekh et al. (2005) note, whatever the stance or position the researcher adopts in relation to her participants and whatever constitutes the relationship between them, power differentials can never be excised and can never be totally within the researcher's control. This means that whilst I may have, for example, attempted to put participants at ease during interview and to let them know I was not looking for particular answers, there is no way of knowing to what

extent this was successful or in what ways my position as their Unit Tutor effected their answers. Similarly, whilst I sought to ensure that the alternative writing practices we experimented with were of value to the students, there is no way to be sure that any changes the students made to the ways in which they approached the writing tasks were not simply because I, as their tutor, had introduced the changes and they, as my students, wanted to get good marks (a well-documented practice, as explained in Chapter 1). As Somekh at al. (ibid.) contest, this ambiguity and uncertainty is a facet of quantitative research to which we have to surrender any hopes of control. However, I do not believe this to be as problematic as it might at first seem. Indeed, I believe this would only present a difficulty if a) I attempted to suggest in my research that power differentials did not exist and b) if I had taken the words, actions and/or writing of the participants and attached meanings to them that I then went on to argue were unconditional and stable, or in some way 'proof' of one hypothesis or another. I believe I am not guilty of either of these scenarios and I hope that this admission will be borne out in the remainder of the thesis.

The second point of interest is that as a piece of practitioner action research the focus of the study resides primarily with me, as the practitioner. So for example, in the research question 'How might I, as a teacher educator, make the process of writing one of value for the students that I teach?' the onus is clearly on me, as the tutor/researcher. Framed in such a way, the power differential shifts somewhat, although, as already established, it certainly does not disappear. However, it can be said that any authorial power I might be understood as possessing, can be reconfigured. In the analysis of 'my' practice, the potential for weaknesses and strengths to be exposed is both an issue for me and my participants.

Having now outlined the broader methodology for the research project as a whole, the following two chapters will convey in more detail the precise nature of the praxiological adjustments I made. In the main, these take the form of a 'method' for alternative writing practices I experimented with called implicated reading.

## Chapter 7: (Implicated) Reading for Writing

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In the September of 2010, I had arrived at a point in my research where thinking and reading seemed to necessarily foreground action. This felt like a natural and ordered progression. I had thought long and hard about the nature of the written spaces students were being asked to think within and had concluded that, the result of these cerebral endeavours now necessitated action.

In pondering what form this action might take, I stumbled upon a rhizoanalysis produced by Alvermann, as a contribution to the now seminal<sup>31</sup> text, 'Working the Ruins' (2000) edited by St. Pierre and Pillow. The chapter seemed to offer the possibility of a tangible method, closely aligned with the philosophical and theoretical basis for action outlined in earlier chapters. The method, drawing heavily on the practices of reader-response theory (for example those associated with literary theory, film and cultural studies as outlined by Pearce, 1997), seemed readily applicable to a unit based around the scrutiny (and so the reading and re-reading) of reflective written accounts.

As a result of Alvermann's own discovery of Deleuze and Guattari (specifically her reading of the introduction to 'A Thousand Plateaus'), she embarks upon a rethink of data gathered as part of a research project she had been involved in, and one which, for all intents and purposes, had been completed; the data analysis having been conducted, conclusions drawn and papers published. Her subsequent re-reading of the research data is framed by a method Alvermann attributes to Pearce (1997) called 'implicated reading'. Alvermann's version of this process involves several stages and the production of various 'new texts'

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<sup>31</sup> I feel compelled here to note that whilst I employ the meaning of 'seminal' to denote an event or happening that is strongly influential, I am immensely irritated by the semantic association to semen. In her keynote lecture at the 2013 Summer Institute for Qualitative Research, Elizabeth St. Pierre, implored delegates to undertake the challenge of developing a new vocabulary; to loosen the grip of humanism by attempting to speak anew: 'make a new word!', she extolled. If I were to take up the suggestion here, I might suggest 'ovarial' (distinguishable from ovarian i.e. pertaining to the ovaries, by the 'i/al' suffix, but maintaining the Latin root 'ovum'), if only to at least draw attention to the absurdity of the gender specificity and bias of language.

based on re-readings of empirical material (existing as a result of the 'normal' research activity Alvermann had undertaken for her original project) whose merit and meaning had already been determined. These 're-readings' of interview transcripts, field notes and the like are informed by a selection of texts less commonly associated with the research process. These additional texts, although varied in style and genre, are all loosely labelled 'popular culture'; for example the television serial cartoon South Park is chosen, as is a critique of an advertisement published in a 'cyber culture' magazine. Alvermann's choice of texts is underpinned by her desire to work with texts that constitute the social networks of the adolescents involved in her original project.

Applying an adapted model of Pearce's implicated reading method, Alvermann takes her selected popular culture texts and reads them against the empirical material. In doing so, she produces what she refers to as 're-memories' of the original data. This process constitutes 'implicated reading' and entails seeking out connections between the seemingly disparate texts in interesting and creative ways, looking for 'ruptures and discontinuities' (Alvermann, 2000) in the otherwise smooth readings of text that occur when one works under the assumption that texts signify meaning. In so doing, Alvermann poses a series of questions to the texts focussing specifically on how they connect with both herself as the reader and with the other texts. The intention is to consider text in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense, as an agent that acts outside of itself rather than as a portal to meaning. Further texts are then produced, which Alvermann names 'commentaries'. This additional textual layer acts as a retrospective space where the re-reading and re-memory process is further considered and possible theoretical frameworks offered to provide further connections between and across the different readings. (Please see Appendix D for a diagrammatic representation of the implicated read and the relationship between the various layers of text included within it.<sup>32</sup>)

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<sup>32</sup> Two further representations are also provided in Appendix D. These are to illustrate the differences and similarities between: 1) Alvermann's model 2) The adapted method I used with students 3) The implicated read I produce in Chapter 9.

Whilst I was aware that any efforts on my part to replicate Alvermann's process of implicated reading could only ever be an adaptation (due to the differing contexts), I set about designing a series of teaching activities based on the implicated reading principles and structures. Firstly, and rather straightforwardly, I decided that the journal entries students produced as a stimulus for thinking and writing, would constitute one 'text' and would perform a similar function to that of Alvermann's empirical data. This made sense, as, very often, it was the smooth readings of these narrative accounts that I desired to disrupt. Spaces for re-reading and re-memories were already built into the unit - these would be the written assignment and the discussion forum generated within each Action Learning Set. The intention being that these spaces would somehow be transformed by the introduction of an additional set of texts, similar to those that Alvermann worked with, and to be read alongside the journal entries with similar questions posed to the 'transreading' process.

The commentaries presented a slight problem because of workload. In the context of an undergraduate's final year of study, an additional writing task required of only the students I worked with was not an option. This stage of the implicated read would therefore need rethinking. I decided that, as the purpose of the commentaries seemed to be to produce retrospective accounts, these could well be generated through interview (undertaken on a voluntary basis) which would allow participants to discuss, comment and explore the implicated reading process further. It would then be up to me to provide a theoretical framework within which these accounts could be further understood/problematised.

The implicated reading 'method', or at least my adapted version of it (which I explain in further detail below), was attractive for several reasons. The first and most pronounced of these is exemplified in the following excerpt from Alvermann's writing;

...texts... are typically thought to signify meaning, albeit meaning that is contingent upon the interaction of subject (reader) and context. Less typical is Deleuze and Guattari's (1986/1980) concept of text, which is predicated on their particular decentring project – the avoidance of any orientation toward a



culmination or ending point. Analysing texts from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, it is how the texts function outside themselves that is of interest. This interest stems from the belief that texts, like rhizomes, connect with other things (e.g., readers, other texts and contexts).

(Alvermann, 2000:117)

This simple description of a refusal to associate textual analysis with meaning spoke to my concerns about what the student writing space was too often reduced to; a structured extrapolation of a concern, want or desire from a written reflection supposed as indicative and representational of a particular set of practices. The subsequent acquisition of 'improved methods' which students might then apply should a similar situation occur in the future, providing them with a culmination or end point to the wider writing project or 'the assignment'. Alvermann suggests that an alternative is possible. Instead of asking what the text might mean (i.e. what is going on in the text/journal entry? What am I doing and why?), she asks how does it function and in what ways does it connect to the reader/other texts and contexts? (I.e. what does the journal entry do to the other texts I am reading and vice versa? How and in what ways do I connect with the writing?)

Whilst I certainly liked the prospect of experimenting with different forms of textual analysis, the question of purpose haunted my activity. In moving students away from a fixatedness on meaning and interpretation, what did I hope to achieve? In response to this concern, I posit the following: Walter Benjamin (cited in Britzman, 2003:222) argues that there are two simultaneous dimensions to social life, the given and the possible and Britzman explains that, 'these dimensions become accessible to us when specific events, circumstances and dilemmas are viewed from a different perspective' (ibid.). Whilst I had often observed both students and myself search for the given within their data/reflective accounts (see analysis in Chapter 2 for examples), the presence of 'the possible' at best seemed analogous to background noise: present, but turned down or tuned out (rather than consciously accessed) for worry it might confuse or detract from 'the given'. As part of his research which applies Deleuzian praxis to the reinvention of school curricula, Roy (2003) alerts us to

several very good reasons as to why this process of 'tuning out' needs to be confronted. Drawing on Deleuze's 'Difference and Repetition' (1968/2004), he notes the over-reliance on a model of thought (and by extension, and for our purposes here, analysis) embedded within and derived from the traditions of western philosophy; those of representationalism as discussed in Chapter 4. To remind us, this model of thought can be described quite simply thus: thought is a faithful interior representation of the outside world and consequently, recognition becomes its chief tool of execution. This process of recognition (in educational systems at least) is governed by 'several regimes of signifiers [for example:] objective assessment, competence, risk, standardisation...' (Roy, 2003:11) all of which find legitimation in their own self-images. The result, for the student, is the loss of other ways of looking, feeling, thinking and doing – triumphs for the circular, self-referential repetition. This can be observed in the students' analyses of their journal writing as a chain of thinking depicted (rather crudely) as follows – 'What is going on here?' (= Interpretation). 'What categories do I have to recognise these actions in the outside world e.g. personalisation, assessment, effective parent/teacher relations etc.?' (= Recognition). 'How do those categories help me understand what happened and/or what should have/might have happened? (= Repetition). The limitations of these familiar cognitive associations are explained by Deleuze:

...representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Representation only has a single centre, a unique and receding perspective and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything but mobilizes and moves nothing.

(1968/2004:55-56)

According to Deleuze then, and, rather paradoxically, given the supposed kinetic potential of the linear progress narrative, what is restricted in this model is movement itself. This is because the recognition involves the evocation of pre-existing categories and boundaries that define what school life, teaching, learning, etc. can and should look like. Any 'movement' is therefore confined to a pre-ordered system of signification. Moving beyond these 'confining spaces' (Roy, 2003) demands a different mode of perception. It requires a manner of

looking that cannot be derived from the old system of thought as representation. Roy (ibid.) is clear, as educators, it is an ethical necessity that we free ourselves from these totalising and self-perpetuating signifiers and categories that code and confine thought and action. I would extend this argument. Do teacher educators not have a duty of care towards their students to foster the same? To provide/suggest/exemplify the means by which we might perceive educational contexts in ways that allow at least glimpses of Walter Benjamin's 'world of possibilities' that exists outside of a sign regime that controls and limits? It might be argued that this is not only desirable for teacher educators, but a moral imperative.

### **What did it actually look like?**

The structure of the final year Teaching Studies unit already allowed significant space for the students' analyses of, and critical discussion around, their written accounts of experience (or Learning Journal entries). As previously discussed, the students were already aware of the working practices of the unit and the requirement that they would be expected to scrutinise their journal entries in groups, with a view to the interrogation of the event/experience the writing represented, becoming a substantial part of their final written assignments. Each student was asked to choose at least one journal entry from a possible collection of several for scrutiny by their Action Learning Set. The scrutiny was organised using a rotational system to ensure that over the course of the unit every student had the opportunity to have their own writing considered. A considerable amount of time was given over to this activity and each student could expect that a minimum of 45 minutes be spent discussing their journal entry. If time allowed or the number of participants in the Action Learning Set was particularly small, or, indeed if the group decided to meet outside of seminar time (which a small number did) each group participant could feasibly have a number of journal entries scrutinised by the wider group. Each 'interrogation' (during seminar time) was preceded by an introduction to an 'additional' text and a tutor-led discussion on the purpose and method of

implicated reading. Usually, some time was spent exploring the additional text, familiarising ourselves with its content, watching or reading, and in most cases an impromptu 'comprehension' activity would follow, where students who were, for whatever reason, more familiar with the text would answer questions by those less so, usually on narrative structure, character profiles and such. As with Alvermann, these texts could all be loosely labelled as popular culture.

The rationale behind the choice of texts varied. Some I chose for their association to the primary education setting. Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone (2001) and The Rainbow Fish (Pfister, 1996) are both children's stories, the former usually read with/to older children, the latter a commonly used picture book in the Early Years setting. Both reflected the working environs of the students and, as such, I hoped would offer some value added profitability (if all else failed, at the very least students would leave with an additional layer of understanding of some popular children's literature). Other texts I chose because I believed their content rich enough to fuel powerful implicated readings. The films/motion pictures Amélie (2001) and Star Trek: First Contact (1996) were chosen for this reason. I had viewed both several times and had come to regard them as 'many layered' narratives. I hoped this narrative depth would make them more malleable to the students or in other words, encourage multiple readings, the students taking from each what they wished from a wider array of possibilities. The final text chosen was Grease (1978) the movie. This was in response to the students expressing a desire to use texts that they were all familiar with. Its many showings on television, along with its age and my 'acquired over time' belief that 'everyone must have seen Grease (1978)' led me to select the film for its supposed popularity. (In the end, this popularity proved to be entirely subjective, contextual and possibly imagined. Approximately half of the students had not seen the film before.)

There were some minimal guidelines offered to support students in structuring the journal scrutiny/implicated reading. Initially, I had considered the guidelines essential as the activity was of considerable duration; my default setting as a primary school teacher overrode any desire to 'see what happened without a

structure' for fear the groups might go 'off task'. This guidance usually took the form of a series of questions that the students would use to structure their discussions. (Please see Appendix E for examples.)

### **Initial analysis of data**

As previously explained, I organised a series of semi-structured interviews fashioned around Alvermann's (2000) 'commentaries' in which the students could reflect and comment upon the process of the implicated reading tasks. The participants were asked several questions about the process of writing generally and then two specifically in relation to the process of implicated reading. One was intended to provoke general commentary (Did any of these [additional popular culture texts] help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently?) and another in the hope that it would furnish more specific examples (What connections, if any, did you make between the texts I presented and your own?) The discussion which follows is based upon an analysis of the interview transcripts with a particular view to summarising the students' commentaries on the implicated reading tasks. Transcripts from the interviews are drawn upon to illustrate emergent themes and to frame discussion around their possible significance.

### **Data and discussion of emergent themes**

#### **Relating to the texts**

Responses to the first implicated reading question were often orientated around the participants' ability/inability to 'relate'<sup>33</sup> to the texts offered, as students described their familiarity with and/or regard for either the specific texts offered or the format in which they were presented. Student K's response is illustrative

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<sup>33</sup> 'Relate' (used with an object) defined by Dictionary.com (2014: online) as 'to bring into or establish association, connection, or relation.'

of what gradually emerged as one of the defining features in students articulating their responses to the activities offered.

*Student K: Er, right OK. I love it when you use those type of popular culture texts, I love watching films [laughs] and I can relate to them more than if you gave me a piece of text – I'm able to relate to the films more....*

(Interview transcript K/1, 2011: lines 262-264. Please see Appendix A.)

An established interest in and familiarity with the texts offered was understood by several students as an advantage and in some cases seemed to predetermine the tone of subsequent responses. Student K, who elsewhere in discussion described herself as being lower in 'ability' than her peers (see Appendix A, line 255), responded very favourably to the texts offered in film format. For Student K, the popular culture texts allowed for a move away from what might be considered as more traditional academic texts (referred to as just 'text' above) which she confesses she finds confusing...

*Student K: ...all those big horrible words just confuse me and I don't feel that I can put them into my own writing.*

(Interview transcript K/1, 2011: lines 253-254. Please see Appendix A.)

Instead, the additional and alternative texts offered allow her the opportunity to participate in the scrutiny of the journal entries and make use of 'text' at a level she thought she may not have otherwise achieved.

*Student K: In terms of the Harry Potter one... it has helped me in terms of my writing, in understanding it better.*

(Interview transcript K/1, 2011: lines 265-268. Please see Appendix A.)

Similarly, Student P identifies his familiarity with film as an asset.

*Student P: ...it just made me engage more with your sessions because the references you were using were ones that I could recognise and appreciate – I know that some people don't like Star Trek or have never seen Amélie but, you know, as soon as you mentioned that I was like all wow, I know about this, I'm going to talk about this with authority – so you know, that really made me prick up my ears.*

(Interview transcript P/1, 2011: lines 203-208. Please see Appendix A.)

In contrast, several of the students felt that their inability to relate to texts made finding connections between these and their own writing, or the writing of others, a difficult task. Several of these students associated not 'relating' to the texts with a difficulty in applying them in useful ways to the task of implicated reading, illustrated by Student J's response:

*Student J: The Rainbow Fish did definitely, not so much Grease and Amélie.*

*...I suppose because I don't really think I understood Amélie, I just don't think I clicked with... I made any connections with it... Yeah and Grease, I suppose the same really, I mean I've never watched Amélie and I watched Grease when I was like three and I never really... I never really felt the need to watch it again cos it never really interested me so I think that because it didn't really relate to me personally then I just didn't really... [trails off]*

(Interview transcript J/1, 2011: lines 61-69. Please see Appendix A.)

One student in particular stood out by drawing attention to how she personally related to the key protagonists presented as part of the narrative, rather than to the text as a whole or the format in which it was presented. For this student, it is a lack of experience in facing dilemmas similar to those of the main character in the story that inhibit her ability to relate to the text offered.

*Student M: ...the Grease one, I've never been in that situation, I've never felt pressured to try and be this person, you know, I'd rather be the loner than to fit in with something, so I couldn't relate to that.*

(Interview transcript M/1, 2011: lines 368-370. Please see Appendix A.)

## **Discussion**

All of the above comments were made in a response to a question that asked the students to reflect on the process of implicated reading and the success (or otherwise) of the texts offered in encouraging alternative or diverse readings of their journal writing and the situations they represented. However, it is their individual relationship with the text offered, rather than the relationships between the texts, that frames their initial responses. Alvermann writes 'implicated readings engage us in intimate relationships with texts' (2000:119). In the case of this study, it seemed that for some students the 'intimate

relationship' was somewhat predetermined by experience, whether that be the extent to which they were familiar with the text offered, or the resemblance between their own lived experiences and that of the characters represented. Unlike Alvermann, whose additional texts (often unfamiliar to her before the implicated reading process) posed no threat in terms of their unknown qualities, the students who participated in the interviews, hankered after the familiarity they had been denied.

Perhaps this was inevitable. It was definitely not a surprise. I had gauged a general feeling from the students during the course of the unit that they were concerned that familiarity was an advantage for some and it had been a disconcertion I had pandered to, as I sought to redress the disparity of familiarity with the introduction of the now, seemingly not so popular film, *Grease* (1978). This response was the result of a hastily drawn conclusion that if, as it appeared, some respondents felt that unfamiliarity with the texts offered inhibited their ability to 'make use' of them, then the researcher/tutor need only choose alternatives that all the students are familiar with and in doing so overcome any barriers that unfamiliarity or an inability to relate to the texts might present. Clearly however, this is not as simple as it might first seem. Student teachers are as heterogeneous as any other professional group, in that their professional status is the only thing we can be sure they have in common. They do not share the same interests, watch and enjoy the same films or read and appreciate the same magazines or books. The excerpts above illustrate this diversity. Choosing the 'magic' texts therefore, that afford all students the opportunity to develop a relationship based on a familial and importantly, a positive accumulation of past experiences, seems a futile endeavour. This brings into question whether implicated reading can be a task organised by an 'other' (as in this case), or whether it is a method best suited for use by oneself, for oneself (as in Alvermann's work).

It is possible to make comparisons between those responses where students identified an inability to relate to the text as being a key contributing factor in their ability to make connections with their own writing, and the apparent



'resistance' Britzman (2011) suggests many undergraduate student teachers display towards the use of theory. Whilst it is unlikely that 'theory', as it is referred to here, is an allusion to popular/low culture forms such as American 'blockbusters' and children's fiction, the basis of Britzman's argument is one which, I think, can be applied here. The resistance that the use of theory as a pedagogical tool often provokes is, according to Britzman, as a result of its perceived 'conflict with experience and identity'; a conflict, which I would argue, is evident in some of the student responses above. Being asked to work with sources located outside their realms of experience or in which they fail to recognise themselves, jars – regardless of its high culture/low culture status or theoretical credentials. It is interesting to note that this aversion might well be described as the absence of recognition – already critiqued as the backbone of representational thought above. As ever, it seems impossible to work outside of humanism's reality. What the implicated reading activities were supposed to subvert, is the very thing that threatens to be their undoing. This is a frustratingly circular paradox. However, it is not without its own 'possibilities'.

Whilst it is true that the implicated reading tasks, as presented to the students, were community activities, the actual application of the method in terms of transforming their own written practices, would have been a more solitary affair (further expanded upon in Chapter 10), where the choice of text would be made on an individual basis. In addition, had I been more attentive to the underlying cause of disconcertion around the lack of familiarity at the time, the effect of the absence of recognition might well have made an illuminative teaching point for all concerned. In real time however, I was unable to think past/through the extemporaneous 'fix', of which I admit to trialling more than one. For instance during the second cycle of the research, and again to counteract unfamiliarity and/or increase the likelihood that students would be able to relate to the material in use, I asked students to bring into sessions their own choice of additional texts. This had the unfortunate and unforeseen result of amplifying the problem. Journal scrutiny time was eaten into as each student, in a bid to familiarise the rest of the group with their choice, explained

their text, answered questions about its narrative structure, described character profiles and so on. It soon became apparent that if the implicated reading was to happen in groups, this approach was not a viable alternative to the original 'imposed' texts. In practical terms, both fixes failed. More importantly however, praxiologically, the fixes were always going to prove ineffectual, as they did little to directly address the underlying and self-perpetuating desires for recognition and repetition.

### **Making Connections**

It was hoped that as a result of the implicated reading activities, students would begin to contemplate text in less settled ways, experiencing the text and its connectivity with other texts and themselves, rather than viewing the text as a singular stable entity from which they could extract meaning. Several students, during interview, commented on the ways in which in practice, implicated reading had allowed them to do this. For example, Student P, who explains how this approach to text, where connections are sought rather than meanings, begins to creep into his everyday life.

*Student P: that whole approach where you can use any source and you don't know where ideas are going to come from, so it made me go home and when I watched The Wire<sup>34</sup> I was like, 'Oh, that really made me think about this.' And you know, I was just watching something and because I had that mind-set I was trying to make links with my own personal life and my writing.*

(Interview transcript P/1, 2011: lines 208-212. Please see Appendix A.)

In some cases connectivity was experienced in such a way that new insights into the possible benefits of such an activity and how these might be described were realised. Student C for example, explains how she has understood the process and its effect.

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<sup>34</sup> The Wire is an American drama televised in England. Set in the city of Baltimore, each season introduced and explored a different facet of life in urban America.

*Student C: .... it's the idea of looking at a sub-text, is the sort of words that came into my head which is what we are expected to do I imagine with say the Learning Journal. You know it's like you say, well I'm actually like this because of this, and only look at the surface; well, it sort of forces you to look at perhaps other ideas ... it made me think about the subtext to my practice I suppose.*

(Interview transcript C/1, 2011: lines 426-430 and 442-443. Please see Appendix A.)

Here, Student C describes the process of implicated reading as one which allows her to find (or create) a 'subtext' to her practice (the 'practice' represented in her journal writing). This description is an interesting one as it points to the creation of another text; a 'third' text – a sort of textual offspring which lurks 'beyond the surface', discovered because the task of implicated reading has forced its production.

The idea that text can be read in more than one way is contemplated by another student. Student B takes this understanding of text one step further and begins to consider the impact of implicated reading in relation to her own classroom practice. The Rainbow Fish (perhaps because of its ready links to the classroom) proved key in inspiring this insight.

*Student B: I think the one for me was The Rainbow Fish, you know, looking at things from different points of view and how you can use text differently, you know when you pick something up you always think of the most obvious thing and I think sometimes that's why children get a bit bored in lessons because a lot of the time we do the thing that comes to us most naturally and we don't like to put ourselves in uncomfortable situations in case something goes wrong, whereas, when you're looking at it from different points of view it enables you to do that more.*

(Interview transcript B/1, 2011: lines 510-516.. Please see Appendix A.)

This extract from Student B suggests that discovering the malleability of text, might be a practically enabling process, encouraging a spirit of risk-taking and a willingness to put oneself in 'uncomfortable situations'.

## **Discussion**

The responses above suggest two distinct but related possible outcomes for the students involved in the project. The first of these relates to the ways in which students articulate their understanding of text.

### **Textual understandings**

As already established, texts are generally thought of as signifiers of meaning (Alvermann, 2000; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/2004; Pearce, 1997). Before the project got underway, this way of understanding text was typically applied by the students to their own writing. Journal writing, which described events in the classroom that students experienced, were taken as reflective starting points from where they would then work to demonstrate development or growth in understanding in relation to particular aspects of their professional work. As such, the original text, in the form of a reflection on a particular experience was relied upon to do the work of a signifier – to allow the student and their peers access to a given moment or moments in time from which they could work to improve upon for the future. This way of understanding and using text implies that in some way the text has successfully managed 'to capture the stuff that really counts – the meaning, the message, the ideas' (MacLure, 2003: 105). The resulting task for the reader here then is a relatively straightforward one, in that as long as they can interpret the text 'correctly' they should be able to surmise its meaning without much difficulty. It is in the subsequent work that the demand lies, for once they have decided what the text means/its message, the students must begin to work on alternative actions that might have seen more satisfactory outcomes. However, there is a fly in the ointment here, because the narrative of experience and experience itself are not one and the same (Brodkey, 1987, cited in Britzman, 2003). In addition, as this model relies overly on representational modes of thought, the scene is set for any alternatives conjured from 'literary research' to be constrained.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987/2004) view of text – a perspective which allows the students to avoid mistakenly assuming texts serve the purpose of

communicating meaning is one which I would argue haunts the responses of Students B and C. Student C, for example, articulates this in her dissatisfaction with 'surface level' work, which in her mind, leads to conclusions about who and what she is as a teacher. ('*Well, I'm actually like this because of this...*') A 'subtext' on the other hand, gestures to a whole other story, open and connectable to experience in a multitude of ways.

It would be foolish however to assume that a perspective which emphasises the rhizomorphous nature of text is always greeted with enthusiasm by those learning to teach. Take the response of Student J:

*The Rainbow Fish.... I'd never really thought about it in that way ... and if I go into school and read that book I'll always think you know, there's a different slant on this book and you know, I never would have thought that and even, I think, you know, I think that's one thing that I will take into school. I don't think I'll be able to read that book without thinking you know... I don't even think I'll read the book to be honest because I'll be thinking, you know, this has two different versions [laughs;] so that definitely informed my practice.*

(Interview transcript J/1, 2011: lines 54-60. Please see Appendix A.)

The Rainbow Fish seems to have caused Student J some consternation.

During our re-reading and re-memories of the texts, there was no expectation that students focus on any one key area of the text, nor that what was assumed to be the texts 'true' meaning (in the case of The Rainbow Fish, an allegory for friendship and sharing) be the layer of the text used to disrupt the smooth reading of journal entries. As a result, as students got used to sharing their re-memories and re-readings, the original text and its associated narrative interpretations appeared to fracture and destabilise, as it gave way to the weight of its usage. I liken this process to the unsettling experience of staring at your reflection in a mirror until what you see there becomes unfamiliar and in some way disparate; as if the features you see are unconnected to each other and the person to whom they are supposed to reflect. In a similar way, the texts we used lost their stable qualities. As a result what usually makes a text significant, its meaning, appeared to begin to loosen. The text lost its static nature and as a result Student J, perhaps not wanting to confuse her would-be

future pupils, decides that reading this, now highly suspect text, is best avoided.

### **Rethinking pedagogy**

The second possible outcome for the students involved in the project related more directly to classroom practice.

As already discussed (see chapters 2 and 5), when teaching is defined by and reduced to lists of competencies and skills to be acquired in order to be effective we find that, without check, a single, static story of teaching begins to infect our understanding of what learning to be a teacher is about. This process constructs a powerful 'right/wrong' binary, one which creates fear and anxiety amongst students, especially during teaching practice, as they try to reproduce the 'right' kind of teaching for those that observe and judge them. Within such a constrained conception of practice there is limited tolerance of mistakes and so the work of the teacher becomes that of minimising the potential for things to go wrong. Of course, the binary is false. There is no right and wrong way to teach, too many variables are at play for this to be even remotely possible. Some techniques will work better than others; some will prove effective one week and then seem ineffectual the next; some will appear as acts of sheer brilliance when performed by one teacher, only to seem awkward and staged when taken up by another – this is why learning to teach, or teacher 'becoming' is a heterogeneous process and one that should necessarily involve trial and error. However, the right/wrong myth lives on. In the response of Student B above, we can see her ponder this false binary and its effects as she describes the decisions she makes regarding classroom activity as being constrained by her concern to avoid the potential for things to 'go wrong' (*...we don't like to put ourselves in uncomfortable situations in case something goes wrong*).

What I find particularly interesting in Student B's comment is her reference to teaching methods that come 'most naturally'.

*...you know when you pick something up you always think of the most obvious thing and I think sometimes that's why children get a bit bored in lessons because a lot of the time we do the thing that comes to us most naturally...*

(Interview transcript B/1, 2011: lines 512-514. Please see Appendix A.)

The use of the adverb 'naturally' suggests a recourse to an innate and inherent practice that student teachers (in the plural, signified by Student B's use of the pronoun 'us') tend to fall back on or rely upon in their everyday teaching activities; as if a particular framework for 'being a teacher' is coded into their DNA. This is evidence of a powerful grand narrative at work – powerful in the Foucauldian sense of power as a relation between forces that has affect. Of this relation, Deleuze writes;

...every relation between forces is a 'power relation'. Nature is a form of visibility and violence a concomitance or consequence of force, but not a constituent element. Violence acts on specific bodies, objects or beings whose form it destroys or changes.

(1988/2006:59)

In other words, what seems natural to Student B is actually historically and ideologically contingent. It is a way or ways of thinking about teaching that has produced a visceral affect. The power relations between forces of the kind detailed in Chapter 5, have produced visibility and violence capable of transforming the 'open list of variables expressing a relation between forces or power relations' (ibid.) into a way of acting and being that has, for Student B, become incorporated into her bodily responses to the teaching and learning encounter to such an extent that these responses or practices take on qualities of the transcendental.

This 'naturalistic' form of teaching is a perfect delusion. Whilst neither belonging to us, nor created by us, we feel certain notions of, or practices for, teaching behaviour are bound into our very fabric as teacher selves. 'Natural teaching' is seductive, its presence providing a 'semblance of order, control and certainty in the face of the uncertainty and vulnerability of the teachers' world' (Britzman, 2003:222). There is something quite understandably comforting about such a proposition. Being and doing what a teacher should be, or do, or

is, is a reward and safe space in and of itself and all at once. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, what feels 'natural' is actually method: ways of delivering learning that are preformed, structured (and even sometimes scripted) means to specified ends. The repetitive nature of such pedagogies, acquired via a process Britzman (2003) describes as 'imitation, recitation and assimilation' may well be comforting, but it is also limiting, not only for the student teacher, but as noted by Student B, to the children they teach. What appears to be 'right', 'natural' and comfortable can also be 'boring'. The argument proposed towards the end of Chapter 5 then, can be directly applied here. The abundance of formulas for 'success' provided for teachers (through the various mechanisms also described and illustrated in Chapter 5), ultimately increase the potential for 'success' to become formulaic. This formula, whilst providing structure and safety for the class teacher (and the children) works to minimise the potential for difference and in doing so teaching and learning activities stagnate or become 'boring' as described here, or 'dull', as detailed in Chapter 5.

Student B's recollection of her implicated reading of *The Rainbow Fish* and the realisation that a text can be viewed from a perspective of difference, rather than repetition ('the most obvious thing') allows her to begin to wonder whether putting herself in an uncomfortable situation, or in other words, deviating from that which comes 'naturally', might be a strategy with positive outcomes for the children she teaches. This is a view of learning and, indeed, learning to teach, which draws less on the accepted orthodoxy of interpretation, recognition and repetition, and more on a view of learning as unpredictable and uncertain (and therefore probably uncomfortable). For Student B at least, the implicated read as a method appears to allow an insight into what might be possible when we look beyond the obvious and see that learning to teach and learning to learn, involves taking risks and venturing away from what seems instinctive. In this way, it gives her the opportunity to practise a set of 'mind skills' that she may well be able to apply elsewhere.



## Concluding thoughts

In viewing the data as a commentary on the event of implicated reading some general thoughts occur to me. Reviewing the interview transcripts, one of my initial concerns was the lack of specificity in the students' responses. I had imagined/hoped that in being invited to comment on the process of implicated reading, students would be able to offer more concrete examples of particular events (recollected in their journal writing) and how reading these, alongside additional texts, had caused them to think differently about that experience and/or its textual representation. During the interviews, I interjected with several follow-up questions in an attempt to procure more specific examples. For instance, in interview with Student B, I asked '*Can you explain what you mean a little bit?*' (Appendix A, Transcript B/1:2011, line 517) and in interview with Student J, I try to tease out specifics by demanding '*Why?*' and '*Why the Rainbow Fish then?*' (Appendix A, Transcript J/1:2011, line 53.) However, despite my attempts to facilitate 'pure' examples, students tended to comment more generally on their practice, often using the word 'practice' in their responses without detailing exactly what 'practices' they were referring to. In my preliminary review of the data, I speculated on whether this pointed to the failure of the data, the project, or both. Whilst some of the specificity I desired could be found in the students' final written assignments (discussed in more detail in Chapter 10) I could not help but be perturbed by the generality of the commentaries students produced. If, as stated earlier in this chapter, I was hoping to provide students with the conceptual tools needed to mobilise thought and perhaps events outside the confines of pre-ordered systems of signification, in reviewing the success of the project, I couldn't be sure that students knew or were able to convey exactly what 'movement' had occurred. Ascertaining the efficacy of the project without such details seemed problematic. After some thought however, I settled with the reasoning that judging the success of the project by my own criteria was probably only as useful as doing so by the benefits identified by the students themselves. My desire for 'impact' as evidenced in specific, measured and assessable practical

examples, another residual thought pattern I attribute to the clutches of humanism.

For some students, it seemed that effect might best be described in terms of the procurement of a mind-set rather than an ability to re-describe practices/experiences on demand. On this basis, it seems possible to say something about the project's success. Deleuze and Guattari are clear in their foregrounding of thought as a contested space, one where the threat of colonisation by the state looms large. They write:

In a sense, it could be said that all this has no importance, that thought has never had anything but laughable gravity. But that is all it requires: for us not to take it seriously. Because that makes it all the easier for it to think for us, and to be forever engendering new functionaries. Because the less people take thought seriously, the more they think in conformity with what the state wants.

(1987/2004:415)

Engaging students in activities that allow them the opportunity to 'take thought seriously' may be considered a complementary addendum to the Deleuzo-Guattarian war machine, albeit a modest one. Creating the conditions which allow for students to question the way they think, provides the 'weapons' necessary in the construction of an alternative 'mind-set'; loosening the grip of conformity. The use of the noun 'weapon' here is purposeful. In 'A Thousand Plateaus', Deleuze and Guattari distinguish tools from weapons. This distinction is a process of 'determining the differential traits according to which an element formally belongs to one assemblage rather than to another' (1987/2004:444). Tools belong to the state apparatus, whereas weapons are of the nomad. Weapons are likened to jewellery. They share an essential relation – small moveable objects, easily transported and pertaining to the object only as an object in motion. They also lend colour, 'turning gold to red and silver to white light' (1987/2004:443). It seems in the process of re-thinking practice and our teacher selves (and in doing so, working towards the construction of an alternative 'mind-set') these qualities, both for the teacher educator and the student teacher, are worthy of pursuit. Whilst it seems that not all students relished the prospect of 'thinking anew' it could be argued that, once 'out

there', the contribution to the process the activities provided, cannot be undone. For this, I think the project had/has value.

Another question I would like to ponder here, is to what extent (and in what ways) the outcomes of my analysis might have been provoked by my choice of 'method' and writing style, and what therefore might have replaced them if I had chosen to apply another form. In this chapter, I have focussed almost exclusively on the present, both in the sense of the temporal and as in the state of being, and on the derivation of themes of value from empirical data. For example, I largely ignore (at least until these concluding paragraphs), the ethereal nature of the learning process – the knock-on effect remains unthought because the interview process is unable to capture it. As such, I fall into the trap of both worrying that without a confinable victory narrative, the project in some way failed. At the same time I neglect the cumulative and perpetual effect of the rhizomorphous praxis I am attempting to contribute towards.

Regardless, during the research cycles 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, the absence of clearly identifiable and specific examples of what re-reading and re-memories of experience against disassociated texts looked like 'raw' (before they had been refined in the form of a written assignment), continued to gnaw away at my desire for a sense of success. So much so, that in the early stages of the second cycle of the data collection phase, I decided to include, what in the event turned out to be quite a substantive modelled example of a 'raw' implicated reading during a taught seminar/session. I devote the following chapter to a description and brief analysis of that event.

## Chapter 8: Talk for Writing: an example of praxis

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'Talk for writing' is a borrowed phrase. It is a remnant of my previous career as a primary school teacher. A Department for Children, School and Families<sup>35</sup> approved strategy, Talk for Writing is a method for improving the writing skills of primary school children, promoted in response to the stubborn persistence of unfavourably comparable SAT writing scores at the end of key stage two. (Please see Appendix C for statistical data.) The theory behind the practice goes something like this: 'good' writers are so because they are able to rely on their ability to access (sometimes consciously, sometimes not) a set of prerequisite skills. For example, 'good' or experienced writers make informed choices about what they are writing as they write (vocabulary, syntax and so on). They develop their ideas logically (ensuring coherence and consistency) and are creative (attempting to craft original, rhythmic or beautiful prose or verse). For experienced writers, the decisions required around each of these processes as to what ultimately makes it onto paper or the computer screen, are often made internally. For the developing writer however, we cannot assume an ability, or even a willingness, to engage in the internal dialogue necessary in thinking out the constitutive elements required in the finished product of writing. It is helpful therefore, if this 'dialogue' is externalised, as explained in the Talk for Writing literature:

...[for] developing writers it is very helpful for these processes to be explored through talk in a supportive learning context. This involves externalising and sharing the thinking involved in the writing process so that ultimately it can be internalised and individualised again.

(DCSF, 2008:3)

My use of the phrase 'Talk for Writing' in the title for this chapter is both playful and illustrative of the pedagogical principles on which the Teaching Studies unit

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<sup>35</sup> The Department for Children, School and Families (DCSF) preceded the Department for Education (DfE) as the responsible governing body for education. It was formed in 2007 and replaced by the DfE in 2010.

is based. Playful, because, as will be seen from the session transcript that follows, I do an awful lot of talking; illustrative because the act of implicating reading, was intended to be a spoken, shared activity, which took the place of the more general Action Learning Set discussion (as detailed in the opening to Chapter 7 above). The collaborative and dialogic nature of this phase of writing has always, at least, for as long as I can remember, been an integral phase of the Teaching Studies writing adventure. The implicated reading tasks were designed to inhabit and re-resource the 'talk for writing' space with a new set of conceptual tools (more aptly now considered as weapons) – the principles on which the creation and continued preservation of a discrete discussion space were founded, remained unchallenged and unchanged.

Choosing to maintain and build on the dialogic character of the unit, was both a strategic and pedagogical decision. Being so integral to the unit, any change to the group discussion format for only the students with which I worked, would, as noted, have constituted too significant a departure from the experience of the remainder of the cohort. Over the course of my experience as a Teaching Studies tutor, it had also become apparent how much the students value the opportunity to talk through their ideas and create new ones collaboratively. The following comments from Students K and C are indicative of the type of student feedback in which I ground these claims.

*Student K: OK, well, in regard to the Action Learning Set and Learning Journal it was good in your Action Learning Sets to read other people's Learning Journal extracts. When you're in school – I've always been by myself you see.*

*Me: Oh have you?*

*Student K: Yeah, so I've never had any other students, so I don't get to see how other people are doing or if what I'm thinking [is what] other people are thinking, so it was good to see that all of us have had some issues that relate to each other and that we're not the only ones going through difficult things.*

*Me: OK.*

*Student K: Ok, so that was helpful and the more they talk about things the more I could write things down and my ideas came into my head as well ...*

(Interview transcript K/2, 2011: lines 321-334. Please see Appendix A.)

*Student C: The whole talking situation and the group stuff really helped, I mean, I know you can't tell us the mark but, erm, I feel the assignment was a better one than I had done before just through talking as well as writing, definitely.*

*Me: So the talk helped... for you the talk helped you write something that you felt was better.*

*Student C: Yeah, yeah, undoubtedly. Yeah, you know even if, even if the mark's not better, looking deeper into stuff you know... I like to think that I've become slightly more academic, I don't know (laughs) even in my thinking rather than just my writing erm ... I think it was a better assignment and I think that was down to the talking and you know someone saying 'have you thought about this? Like no, I hadn't thought about that.*

(Interview transcript C/2, 2011: lines 483-493. Please see Appendix A.)

Having established the significance of the discussion space for both the students and as part of the taught unit's structure more generally, I would like to share and then critically examine my attempts to model to the students how the task of implicated reading might be conducted in its 'raw' (spoken) form. Whilst the example is not collaborative (I modelled this alone as part of the introduction to a taught session/seminar), its intention was to illustrate the cognitive process that constituted implicated reading, with the hope that the students might then replicate this between themselves in the course of their own deliberations on their journal writing.

There are three main reasons for including the transcript here. Firstly it is intended to be illustrative of the practice of, and potential in, the implicated reading process. Implicated reading as a practice is not particularly easy to explain. Without recourse to examples, the method when described can seem too abstract to make sense of. As already explained, this is one of the reasons I chose to model an example of implicated reading to the students and for the same reason I feel it is important to share it now. Secondly, the data allows for another insight into how the process of implicated was received by the students. Whereas in the example introduced in the previous chapter, the students had time to reflect on and consider the practice of implicated reading at some leisure, in the data that follows the students are experiencing the process in real time. Their responses will be the subject of the analysis that

follows. Finally, the extract of data is illustrative of my belief that rhizomatic praxis cannot be reduced to session plans and designed activities, no matter how carefully these have been put together. As demonstrated in previous chapters, the rhizome cannot be contained. It is multiplicitious. Its exteriority is part of its structure and to therefore consider the practice of implicated reading in isolation, as a decontextualized activity, is too partial a glimpse of the interconnectedness that is its form and function. The transcript of the lesson is intended at a counter balance to this partiality. It allows some of the varied dimensions and connectivities to be contemplated. These include, but are not limited to: pedagogy, tutor/student interactions, texts outside of those chosen specifically for the activity, life experiences and events as well as grand narratives and discourse such as those illustrated in Chapter 5. Again, this concept will be considered further in the analysis that follows the transcript.

It may also come to the attention of the reader that the extract of data included below is particularly long. I debated about whether including such a lengthy extract was a good idea, and, for the purposes of 'balance' and fear of defying what is 'normally' expected in the research/thesis genre, I did eventually cut it down somewhat. Still, the extract does stand out as being 'long'. One of the reasons why I choose to include the session transcript in pretty much its entirety is that for a long while I did not think of the session transcript as 'data' at all. By convention, I understand that in the eventual reading of the thesis, this is what the text will be compared to, and indeed, in attempting to make the transcript 'work' as a thesis chapter, I did eventually come to see it, or at least describe it as data – I refer to it as such above. However, if it is to be named data then I would like to ask that, in a gesture intended to keep my original conception of the transcript alive, it might be thought of as "data" in the sense that Koro-Ljungberg and MacLure use the term. In their introduction to a special edition of a journal that required its contributors to 'problematize conceptualizations of data as known, familiar and inert objects' (2013:219), Koro-Ljungberg and MacLure ask that the word "data" be read as 'data-rethought', 'data-becoming' or 'data (under erasure)'. If my original intention in

organising a chapter around the session transcript allowed for its conceptualisation as data at all, then it more befitted a title such as “data-becoming”. This is because whilst I have succumbed to the ‘conventional humanist qualitative research functions’ (St. Pierre, 2013:223) of treating data as an object of analysis; confused and incomplete until, I, the interpreter, shed light and sense upon it, I have at least tried to keep this to a minimum. (The analysis that follows the transcript is deliberately concise.)

So what then, despite my eventual lean towards convention, might cause me to think of (or, at least *have* thought of) the transcript as ‘data-becoming’. Put simply it is because what attracted me to the “data”; what caught my eye and intrigued me was its lack of ‘inertia’. Perhaps this is MacLure’s ‘wonder’ at work.

...the capacity of wonder that resides and radiates in data, or rather in the entangled relation of data-and-researcher.

(2013a:229)

In this way, I had originally experienced the transcript and I in relation with one another, constituted in a mutual becoming. It and I worked together to produce movement in the concept of rhizomatic praxis I was so eager to create. It seemed wrong therefore to attempt to speak for it, or force it into stillness by claiming it as representative of one thing or another. In the final event of analysis, I have tried to remain cognisant and respectful of this original relationship, although, I admit to it as having been corrupted.

This cognisance is borne out in what follows. The balance is rarely in favour of data. It is here. The transcript makes up much of the remainder of the chapter. I do not interrupt it. I have tried my utmost to leave it alone; restrain myself from carving it up and getting rid of what I understand as having little use, although, again, for fear of breaking with convention too hardily, I have minimised it a little. For your judgement, the extracts that did not make the final cut were mostly conversational, light hearted snippets of dialogue between the students and I and the students with each other; often jokes or random tangents of thought (usually mine!). There is something sad about that, I know, but there it is.



Note: In order to make sense of what follows, the reader will need to read 'The Shoe-trainer Hybrid', a Learning Journal entry from my Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT<sup>36</sup>) year, dated May 2005.<sup>37</sup> This is included below. An extract from the session/seminar plan is also provided. The reader may also find additional information on the plot and main characters as well as transcripts from relevant sections of Star Trek: First Contact (1996) (the text against which I read the journal entry below), useful. These can be located in Appendix F.

### ***Journal Entry: The Shoe-trainer Hybrid***

*Recently I have started to notice gaps between the level of importance certain issues gain from different members of staff within my school. I currently teach Year 3.*

*The first incident occurred several weeks ago during a staff meeting. The Year 2 class teacher raised the concern that she had noticed that some of the children in school had been wearing what she described as shoe-trainers. These are trainers which are apparently disguised to look like shoes. She explained that she had told children wearing them in her class that they were unacceptable footwear as the school policy forbids the wearing of trainers and these, although strictly not a trainer, were neither strictly a shoe. The Year 2 teacher continued. She wondered why a shoe couldn't just be a shoe and that 'nowadays', increasingly, children's wear is more likely to be fashionable rather than practical. There was some discussion amongst staff and then a general agreement that a note should be added to the upcoming newsletter about this new type of shoe-trainer, requesting that they are not to be worn in school. The Year 2 teacher then mentioned that she had noticed several children in Year 3 with these shoe-trainers on, and that they had been wearing them for 'quite some time'. Although the comment wasn't addressed towards me, it was clear that I was expected to remark, as she had then gone on to name the shoe-trainer offenders in my class. I was aware of the required response. I was supposed to say that I would talk to the children about the issue, perhaps mention it to parents/carers, however I couldn't bring myself to say it, and instead I shrugged and muttered that I hadn't noticed, this being, if nothing else, the truth. After the meeting I resigned myself to take notice of the particular footwear which was causing concern and resolve the issue from there.*

*The next day, without informing the children, I inspected the policy breaking footwear. They were black, leather, had a good size tread and laced up. I thought they looked like shoes. I gave it some additional thought however, as they had warranted particular attention from the Year 2 teacher. I wondered what could be the possible reason for not allowing the footwear. As far as I could see they did not break the*

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<sup>36</sup> Please see glossary for a full explanation of the term **Newly Qualified Teacher or NQT**.

<sup>37</sup> As part of my MA studies at that time, I was required to keep my own Learning Journal.

*school's policy for dress code. The matter of a shoe-trainer hybrid seemed somewhat ridiculous. They looked like shoes to me. I wondered if a possible health and safety reasoning could be applied for disallowing the shoes but failed to see how.*

*Reluctantly, I called the shoe-trainer offenders over for a discussion. To be honest it probably wasn't what the Year 2 teacher had had in mind. I mumbled something about the newsletter and that 'other teachers' had noticed that they had been wearing shoe-trainers. I asked if they would ask their parents to buy something that looked more like a real shoe next time they went shoe shopping. The group of boys seemed to find the whole thing amusing; at first trying to pass the offending footwear off as shoes and then admitting they bought them because of their similarity to a trainer. I must admit I saw the funny side too.*

## **Modelling the implicated read**

As with any taught session, I planned the content of this seminar beforehand. I re-read *The Shoe-trainer Hybrid* and watched again extracts from *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996). In doing so, I structured my thoughts around an adapted version of Alvermann's question to the text/s: 'What did the [popular culture/science fiction text *Star Trek: First Contact*] do to my textual other?' (2000:119). 'Textual other' is used here to refer to the representation of self I present in the journal entry but with the addendum that, as Pearce (1997) observes, 'no utterance (either written or spoken) is made in isolation, but is always dependent upon the anticipated response of another (actual or implicit) addressee' (1997: 29). At the time of writing (during my own MA studies), *The Shoe-trainer Hybrid's* addressee was both my actual other (alone and amongst peers) and my designated Unit Tutor. In the taught session/seminar in which it is seen here some years later, the journal extract is addressed to my teacher/tutor other and her students.

## **Extract from session/seminar plan**

*I find the Borg<sup>38</sup> fascinating: a collective, one mind, one purpose, shared goals, no individual identity. It resonates with what I would describe as the old-school, school view. They serve as a frightening reminder of those aspects of school life that foster a sense of the 'institutionalised'. Schools are often criticised as being places where creativity, uniqueness, independence of thought are suppressed. The Borg are this fear of schooling realised to the extreme. My mind wanders back to the last primary school*

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<sup>38</sup> Please see Appendix F for a character profile of the Borg.

*in which I worked. The building was old; Victorian and spread across three levels. To ensure the safety of the children, classes were patrolled during transitions both by teachers and head boys and girls; the expected formation barked at those that fell out of step 'one behind the other, no talking!' It took far too long for me to realise the ridiculousness of such a system and its tenuous causal relationship to safety. In the fantasy world of the Federation<sup>39</sup>, for those facing assimilation, resistance is apparently futile. For children, opportunities for resistance to the seemingly ridiculous are everywhere. We do expend a lot of energy trying to control resistant impulses; are these efforts wasted? Perhaps this energy needs to be refocused? Does the shoe-trainer hybrid represent resistance and if so to what? To policy, uniformity, conformity...*

*A student in the last session raised the issue of shared goals and behaviour policies. In the world of Borg, my position is disputed, clearly my connection to the hive mind is not what it should be – actions indicate this. But it is what belies these actions that the Borg force me to consider. Small acts of subversion are such wonderful things – perhaps my retelling of the story serves to remind me of this. Perhaps I simply retell it because I live up to my own ideals in it? Myself resisting, as much as, in my precarious position as a NQT, I believe I can. But here's a thought – what if those small acts of resistance are empowering because they are just that, resistance... Perhaps my job here is to give the boys something to resist, let them bask in the secrecy of being resistant. In this way maybe I failed here – not thought about it like this before.*

*The Borg force me into asking questions of my practice; past and present. They encourage new readings. This is a story of subversive acts, the balance of power necessary to allow resistant acts to be empowering. Maybe it is about none of the things.*

## **Transcript of session**

*Me: ... We know that we have this story about practice; our data that we start off with and really it's our job to think about that, I used the word [in the previous session] divergently, rather than convergently, thinking outwards, thinking about all the possibilities and then I also said that I would give you ways in which I think you might do that. This is one of those ways. It's actually got a fancy name, it's called implicated reading. I suppose it is just a method by which you use one text to help you... well the process is about you making connections between one text and another and the result of that process is that you understand one text differently, interpret it differently, find something that you might not have found before, or you couldn't find before, as a result of looking at it in this different way. That's the theory anyway. So I had a go at it myself with Star Trek. So what we're going to do, or what I'm going to do is we're going to watch the clip of Star Trek and then I'm going to take you through the process by which one – the text, helped me to understand another text slightly differently, does that make sense?*

*Students: Yep.*

*Me: ... remember the hand-out? [The students have been given a hand-out in the previous session providing them with contextual information to help them make sense*

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<sup>39</sup> Please see Appendix F for an explanation of the Federation.

of the film.] So, we've got the big Borg ship and what's happened is there's been a big battle and at some point during the battle, undetected, the Borg have transported themselves onto the Star Ship Enterprise. Yes? And it says that in the hand-out and this is the very exciting moment that Captain Picard realises that there is an invasion on his ship. Right, it's very nice and then we're going to go into the battle scene where they start fighting off the Borg. Happy? And you know what the Borg are?

*Student/s: Yeah.*

*Me: Anyone like to explain? What the Borg is?*

*Student X: The enemy.*

*Me: It is the enemy, yes.*

*Student O. Kilmurray: They're like part... they take on any sort of beings, so they... er, take... er, like a human say and they take all the emotion out of them and then make them into like a robot.*

*Me: Yeah, a cyborg.*

*Student O. Kilmurray: I've watched it before now.*

*Me: Ok, so very good. And already there you see there are some questions, some fascinating questions about identity you see, but we'll talk about that more afterwards. Right, does anyone need any more help in realising where we are going in terms of this clip of Star Trek. [Pause] No? Ok, someone get the lights for me at the back.*

*[We watch the film clip.]*

*Me: OK, does anyone want to ask any questions about the film? Like who anyone was, or what was going on?*

*Student R. Marshall: I have loads of questions.*

*Me: Good, right go on.*

*Student R. Marshall: Who are those alien people?*

*Me: Which alien people, the Borg?*

*Student R. Marshall: I think so.*

*Me: Right those are the baddies, they are the Borg, so what they want is...*

*Student X: their knowledge?*

*Me: Well, kind of, yeah, everything about them. What they do is... [I begin drawing on the whiteboard] ... so this is the enemy, they are a collective and what this means is that they have one mind. Everything about them is the same. What they do is, and the reason why they are such a powerful race is, they assimilate [more drawing on the whiteboard] other races, erm, other worlds. So you've got Earth, which is full of human*

*beings. [More drawing.] That's earth [pointing at my drawing of Earth] and it's full of human beings and humans have their own special characteristics, erm... they have personalities, intelligence, abilities and lots of other good stuff and the Borg want it, so what they do is, they invade and then they assimilate all of those good people, they make them into Borg. They inject you with this thing that makes you Borg and so they kind of take your race and they swallow it into themselves, and they take the best bits out of your race. Does that make sense? Yeah? And the bad bits they don't want, they leave. So basically, they just suck all of the life out of complete worlds and take all of the best bits and use it to complete themselves. They want to be like a supreme specie – like the best things ever ...once you're assimilated you are connected to what is called the hive mind and it basically takes away your free will, so there's no free will there, all things are the same. So did you see they all kind of started moving in unison, it's because they're all thinking the same things, they don't kind of have any free personalities.*

*Student X: Who controls them?*

*Me: Well, originally no one but then in this film they introduce ...*

*Student O. Kilmurray: A super Borg.*

*Me: Yeah. A new character... Ok, right, well my intention was to use this part of the film, in particular the Borg to help me understand my story of The Shoe-trainer Hybrid differently. Do you remember The Shoe-trainer Hybrid story?*

*Student X: Yeah.*

*Me: Thank you. Two things I'm particularly interested in... first of all I find the Borg fascinating. So, what do they make me think of? Well, obviously, they make me think of fancy, philosophical questions about identity. What makes a person, a person? And it's interesting to me, you know that whole nature, nurture debate about how you turn into the person that you think that you are. But it also connects with, unfortunately, some of the ways which I've come to understand how schools work. Sometimes schools... and you probably... this is ... and it's not my opinion, this is just out there; schools often have a reputation for fostering something that is quite Borg-like. So that kind of uniformity, all moving as one, that blanket policy thing. I go to visit schools and all the classes do Kagan structures, all of them. I've been to schools where all the classes have to have displays in exactly the same way. Yeah, so you go in one classroom and you think this is exactly the same as that classroom over there and the kids all have the same uniforms on ... it reminds me of... did I tell you this last week about how the children moved around the school... I did. [Pause] No, I don't think I did. I used to work in a school that was housed in a very old building. It was Victorian; three stories, swimming pool in the basement, which we didn't use, lots of concrete and stonework everywhere; very old fashioned; girls entrance over there, boys entrance other there and so on, and when I started working there I was told that... I was in Year 6... when the bell went at play time you had to escort your kids out from your classroom all the way down to the playground. The classroom was up here and the playground was like on the ground floor, which I used to hate because it's really time consuming. You know, you have a 15 minute break and it takes you 5 minutes to march them down and five minutes to get back up again, but I did it because I was told to. So, the bell would go and all the kids would line up at the door – Year 6 kids, and I would walk at the front and all the kids would walk behind me in a line – and*

*they had to walk in a line. At all the doors and at various points... this is a true story... at various points in the school where... where mischievous things could happen, monitors were posted, some of them were children and some of them were adults, teaching assistants and so forth and if any of the kids stepped out of the line formation then they got told [more loudly] 'one behind the other, no talking,' in that tone; [again, more loudly] 'one behind the other, no talking.' So, you had all these kids walking along one behind the other, no talking, one behind the other, no talking... for me, that and the Borg... very, very similar things going on there. One behind the other, no talking; what possible rationale is there for that? What harm does a bit of talking do? But I worked there for a year and never said anything because it only really occurred to me afterwards, because I thought, you know, one behind the other, no talking; that's just what they do. So when a kid came out of the line, I'd say it, 'one behind the other, no talking.' So what's that got to do with the shoe-trainer hybrid? Bear with me for a minute; these are some things that I was thinking. Remember that those kids were wearing shoe-trainer hybrids and I sort of laughed it off and said next time... in future, ask your mum and dad to get you something that's more like a shoe and they laughed and said, we're wearing them because they are shoe-trainers and they saw the funny side and I knew what I should have done is go to them and say, 'I have noticed that you are wearing a shoe-trainer hybrid and that's against school policy,' but I didn't. Erm... I started to think about the shoe-trainer... remember when the Borg were saying resistance is futile, that's the Borg's saying. There is no point in resisting assimilation... can you see where I'm going with this?*

*Student/s: Mmm... yeah.*

*Me: There is no point in resisting assimilation, it's going to happen to you anyway; you're going to be got by the Borg: the uniformity, the conformity of school; you are going to be got by it, there is no point resisting. Now, what these two kids [the children in The Shoe-trainer Hybrid] are doing; they are being a little bit resistant. They are being a bit clever and they know exactly what they are doing and I like that idea and that's maybe why I keep telling this story and that's probably why I was so reluctant to do anything about it because resistance... that's a nice little concept there in an educational setting, is it not? Resisting... what film is it? There's a film and in it they call it 'The Man'. What film is it? Oh, er that's it, erm... Jack Black's in it.*

*Student T. Arrandale: School of Rock,*

*Me: School of Rock. Put your hand up if you've seen School of Rock. [Lots of hands go up.] Aw, cultural reference that we can all share. It's about resisting 'The Man'. Yeah? And the man is basically a metaphor for the person who tells you what you should be doing with your life – the way that you act, the things that you say, the things that you do... that is 'The Man' and what they are doing is resisting and I like it because small, little acts of resistance, that's quite a nice thing to be part of, like the secrecy of having these shoe-trainer hybrids on and thinking 'yeah, I'm sticking it to The Man.' ['Sticking it to The Man' is a line from the film 'School of Rock'.] So I like it, and I kind of like the part that I played in allowing them to do that because if you suppress all those little acts of resistance then... I become 'The Man' and I don't want to be 'The Man'. There is something else that I thought of which is this last point here [pointing to note I have made on the whiteboard] which is mind boggling stuff, which I'll erm....*

*Student S. Kelly: What happened to the boys? Did they, erm, get new shoes or...*

*Me: Can't remember. Bear in mind it was my NQT year, so it was quite a while ago. The only reason that I have the story for you is because at the time I was doing the masters and I wrote it in a journal entry.*

*Student CS: I just wondered like did they get new shoes or...*

*Me: Erm, let me think. Well, it was one of those things that at the time it was big news and then it sort of peters out and then the following September they go up to another class and I've got no idea what shoes they wear because I don't really care. Erm, then... it was only... literally, I'd never thought about this before... I wrote in my plan, bless me, there's about three paragraphs where I'm thinking all of this stuff through. So, I'm thinking OK but... I'm thinking about these kids and I'm thinking about it from these kids' position and they've kind of got this little shared secret... the point is, resisting something and having that little collective; that group; that part of your identity, is that you are somehow separate to the teachers and that they're the big guys and they're trying to rule you and you do those little things that let you win, even if it's for only a moment in the morning when you put your shoe-trainers on - you know you're winning there and that's quite an empowering thing, but in this kind of odd way, I take that away from them because I want to be as cool as they are. I want to be in on the secret – does that make sense?*

*Student L. Clarke: Did you get some trainer hybrids? [Students laugh.]*

*Me: Ha, ha, no. In some kind of way I stop it from being this cool little secret because I want to be in on the secret because I'm also young and cool and I just wonder if there's a little bit of that there. Do you ever get that? When you're teaching and something... For them to be empowered by resistance, maybe I needed to be 'The Man'. Maybe the bigger thing for me to do would have been; 'I know about those shoe-trainer hybrids; it's not on.' Maybe they wouldn't have worn them anymore, but the point is I would have given the opportunity to resist me, to be secretive about something and that's quite an exciting place to be. I've never thought about that before. Maybe, I tell the story because I think it makes me look good. Maybe, on reflection it doesn't make me look good. All possibilities, some of which I have never thought about before, but thanks to Borg, I now have. There endeth the lesson.*

## **Analysis of teaching practice**

The present analysis will be deliberately concise, the rationale for which is detailed above. The analysis draws almost exclusively on a Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology.

## **The outer edges of phenomena**

In his study of Deleuze and curriculum, Roy reminds us of the restrictive nature of representational thought. In doing so, he implores the reader 'to look in the

passages and transformations, at the outer edges of phenomena' (2003:21) as it is there, we will find the subtleties of difference that occur continuously in the teaching and learning event. These edges contain within them the promise of reconceptualisation, moving the practitioner away from representationalist ways of constructing practice-based boundary distinctions. Looking at the outer edges reveals entryways into ways of rethinking what has occurred. More importantly, when applied to reflective practice as practised in the Teaching Studies unit, this process might allow for the text to live agentically; to have an effect on the reader; to produce something new in the world. In Deleuze and Guattari's own terms, a text; 'only exists through the outside and on the outside' (1987/2004: 4). We should never ask what it means but rather 'we will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities' (ibid.). I believe this process is illustrated by the model I provided the students that is reproduced above. Re-reading *The Shoe-trainer Hybrid* against *Star Trek: First Contact* provides an entryway into the event that had not previously been available. The concept of resistance was one with which I was familiar, however, the trans-reading process folds the idea of futility into the retelling of the original experience. This leads me to explore the secretive, communal and joyful aspects of resistance as a counterpoint to futility. In this way, resistance has its own discrete purpose. It is both a relational act (relational to power) as well as a source of community, identity and empowerment. In this manner, the outer edges of phenomena have produced new ways of seeing the encounters the experience relays.

### **Confessions of the poststructuralist self**

In Chapter 3 I wrote extensively about the conceptualisation of self and the possibility of a writing task that could contribute towards the process of 'writing ourselves'. The naming of this process ('writing ourselves' as distinct from 'writing ourselves better') was a consequence of an expedition into the theory of the poststructuralist self – a disarrayed self, understood as a site of constant struggle and conflict. I suggested that if one understands identity as de-



essentialised and fragmented and therefore continually shifting and as a consequence reforming, writing might function as a space where students are able to capture sites of 'identity struggle' and use these as springboard events from where they can actively engage in the process of identity reformation. Whilst it was not my original intention that the implicated read method reproduced above, modelled this particularly (I wrote Chapter 3 some time after the teaching episode depicted here), I believe in the event and to some extent, it worked as an articulation of the revelatory outcomes of 'writing ourselves'. The fact that the writing here is the act of reading and the spoken word, makes, I think, little difference in that, as already discussed the implicated 'read' serves to generate the raw material for the eventual performance of the implicated 'write'.

In the teaching and (hopefully) learning episode above, the idea of the essential self is ruptured by the folding in of fictional beings (Borg) to the events I chose to depict. My self-proclaimed identity as an accomplice and advocate of resistance fractures under the gaze of the implicated reading process as it struggles against the disequilibrium of my teacher and student self. This leads me to question the 'who' of my 'I' and consider how it has been historically and socially constructed (Davies and Gannon, 2005) by the identity groups I am simultaneously invested in (student/pupil, teacher, renegade, authority and so on). The possible results of this thought process are only gestured towards in the transcript and session plan presented in this chapter – this is an implicated read that happened under the daily stresses and distresses of a teacher educator planning, teaching, researching, attending meetings etc. However, even in these glimpses of the method 'proper', I am led to question the cultural practices that I have taken up as an articulation of a perceived notion of identity that quivers fiercely under the weight of inter-textual readings.

## **Rhizomatic praxis**

Quite often, I wonder how well students are able to follow my usually erratic, seldom linear, roller-coaster of thought/s as I continually struggle to organise them into coherent, intelligible speech that has purpose. Re-reading the lesson transcript above (several times for the purpose of this chapter), I pondered this 'wandering' more than usual. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I concluded that I was able to make my point/s eventually, but as is so often the case, my 'delivery' was, what I affectionately self-refer to as, 'all over the place'. As to ascertaining the pedagogic merits of this erraticism, I have not passed judgment one way or another. As already discussed, to reduce teaching method/styles/preferences to a status of good or bad is dangerous and this is as true for teacher educators as it is for student teachers. Instead, I have worked on trying to re-think it. In doing so, I recalled the work of Diane Masny on multiple literacies. The literacy specific content of Masny's work, interesting as it is, was not the subject of my (current) wandering mind, but an analogy she uses to explain the Deleuzo-Guattarian principle of transcendental empiricism, or in other words, the belief that experiences that constitute the empirical world cannot be understood in ordinary ways, as single events belonging to the individual, but as belonging to an assemblage or virtual thought of '. . . an experience'. Here is the analogy:

### **Reading the coffee**

Imagine you are walking along a corridor at work and smell coffee.

The reading of the smell of coffee has disrupted. What could happen next? The clock on the wall says it is 4 o'clock: a visual and printed reading. There is a rhizomatic rupture; whatever has been going on has been disrupted/deterritorialized. The rupture brings on the virtual thought of a break, a going home or potentially the thought of a next vacation. Where the smell of coffee could lead is unpredictable.

(Masny, 2013:341)

Rhizomatic praxis, whether it be analysis or the act of teaching, operates within transcendental empiricism. It can be consciously constructed, for example, in

the chapters that follow, or every day and accidental, as exemplified by the smell of coffee. The point is, that rhizomata are heavy with the weight of virtual potential and, as no binary exists in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms to separate the virtual and actual, rhizomatic ruptures are metaphysical entities that have the power to amorphosise what had previously looked to have a given shape or structure. So, whilst the map of rhizomatic praxis may well be tricky to read, it can also result in learning encounters that may not have otherwise been produced. To some extent this describes the event(s) presented above. It is clearly not singular, it is multiplicitious; the implicated reading is inseparable from a multitude of other places, people, thoughts, actions – cultural, social and political enactments. In this sense, it is as much about and because of these things, as it is about and because of the trans-reading of 'texts'.

In light of this, it is interesting to note the ways in which the students, especially towards the end of the teaching and learning encounter, seem to make several attempts to draw back from or close down this rhizomatic happening. The technique employed by the students can, I think, be categorised as a resort to realism: realism as described by MacLure as;

...the assumption of knowledgeable authors and readers, jointly engaged in the production and accumulation of knowledge 'about' an external reality, discernible through a seemingly transparent language which appears to reflect it faithfully.

(2003:93)

There are possibly three reversions to this essential realism in the session transcript above – the first two are from different students but both focus specifically on outcomes. Student S. Kelly asks: *What happened to the boys? Did they, erm, get new shoes or...* and Student CS remarks: *I just wondered, like, did they get new shoes or...* I suggest that these questions can be read as 'deferral tactics'. In the process of the implicated read, the essence of the situation (what happened, to whom and why) is fragmented to the point of aggravation. What is left is a muddle of contingency, possibility and difference that is, in different measures for different subjects, liberating and frightening. To lose the essence or sense of absoluteness in a situation, or event, or

phenomenon is a jarring and often disturbing experience as it leaves the participants without 'a hook'; a single and easily captured narrative of the real that can be grappled with, with relative ease. I suggest that it is the deferral of this jarring and disturbing sensation that drives the students' interventions. To focus on 'what happened in the end' opens up the potential for a return, via language, to the finite and resolvable and in search of these the students quiz me as to the 'ending' of the story. In the event, I do not actually recall 'what happened in the end' and so, even if I had wanted or felt obliged to, I would not have been able to answer the questions. Perhaps this was best. If the desire for deferral had been satisfied, it may well have undone the work that the implicated read intended.

I suggest that the third intervention (*Student L. Clarke: Did you get some trainer hybrids?*) can also be read as a deferral of disturbance but as it carries with it the purpose of affecting humour, I think it needs to be considered separately, although similarly. Here, the attempt at deferral is diffused with the potential for playfulness. Albeit in a slightly different manner, I would also suggest that Student L. Clarke's interjection here can be read as a recourse to essential realism, however with the added (subconscious?) intent of affecting the temporal framework which holds the rhizoanalysis or implicated read in place and therefore adding to the efficacy of the deferral tactic. Laughter, mirth and frivolity are located very much in the present; they are the here and now as well as the actual and real. As a result of sharing laughter together we, the students and I, can return to a present (and therefore, arguably more 'real') place and space that is easily experienced. You joke, we laugh. It is a deferral that has the potential to relocate us as essential beings, at once and together, in the same time, living an experience that can be easily and reassuringly divided into cause and effect: You Joke, We Laugh.

The intention of this chapter was to provide a specific example of re-readings and re-memories of textual representations of experience against seemingly disassociated texts.

In responding to my need for 'an example' I have realised further qualities of rhizomata, in that ruptures in experience (teaching events) are everywhere and therefore the potential for deterritorialising (teaching and learning) spaces are copious. In the teaching episode recounted above, the unexpected subtleties of difference that occur when we read into the outer edges of phenomena (Roy, 2003) and the existence of text 'through the outside and on the outside' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/2004: 4) are played out. However, it is also noted that this 'playing out' can be experienced as dangerous and jarring. These themes will be taken up in the following chapter.

## Chapter 9: Revisiting the “Data”: writing a rhizome

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The previous two chapters detail some of the ‘soft changes’ I made to my teaching and the associated working practices of the students in my seminar groups. The changes signalled an effort on my part to re-conceptualise, with the students, the process and purpose of textual analysis. Through the formulation and application of these conceptual weapons for ways of looking, thinking and experimenting, I hoped that we would be able to collectively expose and dislodge some of the writing myths (and embedded within these, professional development myths) that constrain related pedagogy. The desired outcome of the task was that we (the students and I) might loosen the grip of existing boundaries and categories in this area of Initial Teacher Education.

In earlier chapters of this thesis, and particularly towards the end of Chapter 3, I suggested some alternatives to the textual practices that had become ingrained in the Teaching Studies element of the Initial Teacher Education programmes I work within. One of these, derived from a Derridean perspective, required attention be paid to the productive nature of text. This strategy seemed particularly useful for students’ analysis of their own journal writing or stories of practice, as it allowed for the possibility of dispelling some of the myths that surround first person narratives. Rather than assuming that writing innocently reveals the truth about situations and/or the authors’ responses to them and focussing on these as the starting points for discussions about practice, students might instead be asked to shift their focus onto the ways in which the text has been constructed and to what end. Chapter 3 closed with MacLure’s practical suggestion of how this might be done. Putting questions ‘to a text’ (such as: ‘Who gets agency? Whose ‘voices’ are privileged in this text? Who is silenced?’ 2003: 82) was posited as one of the ways in which students could try to look at their own texts differently – to look under their surface and

see what of interest they find there. This strategy is one that I have practised and found useful both in my teaching and research. Indeed, I would like to take this opportunity to pose several questions to my own writing in Chapter 7, in an attempt to explain how the notion of producing a rhizome in writing (the purpose and intent of this chapter) came about.

In her list of questions to the text, MacLure also offers the following suggestions:

What other kinds of text, is this text like? How does the text make its bid for believability? Where does the text get its authority? [And finally;] What kinds of oppositions structure the arguments and the moral framework of the text?

(ibid.)

When reflecting on the 'production' of Chapter 7 in particular, it is worth noting the original purpose of the text. In its conception, the chapter was initially an attempt to make my work 'publishable'. In doing so, I looked to other texts to formulate my strategy of 'attack'. Having previously had a paper rejected on the grounds that it lacked a sufficient methodology and empirical base, and being very new to writing for an audience outside of my familiar university setting, I set about looking at other published articles to see what kinds of formats were acceptable and which, by a process of elimination, were not. Indeed, so keen was I on replicating what had already been deemed as 'acceptable' educational research, that I read several published articles for the sole purpose of extrapolating tips on structure, organisation and even commonly used phrases. This process, along with the tacit knowledge of the genre I had gleaned over the course of my academic career, forged my framework for authority and believability. I would, I decided, need to provide a theoretical framework, set out context and a methodology<sup>40</sup> and, from there, draw out themes. Each theme would be afforded its own subheading and be followed by extracts of data (to 'prove' its empirical worth) and a 'discussion'. None of these facets of the text were organic – they did not happen 'in the moment' of writing, neither did they originate from the data (the themes did not come to me, I went

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<sup>40</sup> In its conversion to a thesis chapter the methodology was added to substantially, eventually becoming a chapter in its own right.

looking for them), rather each was carefully orchestrated. In this instance, the text had a high production value.

In trying to ascertain what (if any) oppositions structure the writing in Chapter 7, I am inclined to suggest that the writing hints towards an authorial subject under the rule of the hegemon 'outcomes' – its associated binaries undergird much of my analysis. As ostensibly a piece of action research, designed to integrate 'the development of practice with the construction of research knowledge' (Noffke and Somekh, 2005:89), I looked to the data for confirmation or otherwise of the improvements I hoped my interventions would garner. As Carr and Kemmis explain, the purpose of action research is for participants to 'improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices' (cited in McNiff, 1988:20) and in pursuing identification and the possible validation of this 'improvement', I orientate my analysis around successes and failures. In doing so, I took my actions and the students' responses to them and searched for meaning in the texts that represented them. I looked for patterns and messages 'hidden' in the data that, once teased out, would provide insights into the success (or otherwise) of the project.

This spritely analysis is not meant to suggest that production value necessarily negates any other kind of value. I was, for example, particularly pleased to discover how many of the students thought the process had enabled them to 'destabilise' texts, including those that they had become accustomed to using as part of their everyday teaching practices (e.g. *The Rainbow Fish*, 1996). There was also the sense that (some) students were learning how they might unfurl themselves from the grip or quest for certainty and absolutes. In this way, the chapter had an enabling feel to it. It seemed to offer much by way of formulating responses to the original research questions I had posed – How might writing be used as a tool for learning? And; How might I, as a teacher educator, make the process of writing, one of value for the students that I teach?

However, I am mindful of the assertion that all texts conceal as much as they reveal and as St. Pierre notes (2000:271), any writing space that has become



standardised and normalised will in some way constrain content. My writing in Chapter 7 was consciously and carefully standardised and normalised. We are left to wonder therefore, what else might the texts on which it was built, produce? In the remainder of this chapter I hope to posit possible responses to this question.

In doing so, I turn again to Alvermann. I remind myself of the principles on which the implicated read is based. Rather than resort to the comfort of signification (where we work from the assumption that text has meaning and which often guides us towards a hermeneutic response), we instead see the text as 'only a small cog in an extra-textual practice' (Deleuze, 2004; xv-xvi). Our task is to see what else the text might 'do'. As Grosz explains;

It is... no longer appropriate to ask what a text means, what it says, what is the structure of its interiority, how to interpret or decipher it. Instead one must ask what it does, how it connects with other things (including its reader, its author, its literary and non-literary context).

(1994: 199)

It is to this task that I now turn.

The remainder of this chapter will constitute my own implicated readings of a selection of chosen texts, including a re-reading of some of the data selected for use in Chapter 7 and its subsequent analysis. It is intended that the readings, rather than focus on the extrapolation of meaning, will draw upon a more dynamic, inter-textual set of relations. An implicated read must, at its core, achieve two things. The first is to consider closely the relationship between texts and the reader. Drawing on the work of Bakhtin, Pearce (1997) explains that the reader is always called upon as an individual, to make a certain sense of the text they are presented with. In other words, the text can speak to some in ways that it might not necessarily speak to others. It is the conflation of textual and extra-textual features that enables our reading. It is because of this that the reading process is more than a cognitive one.

Rather than suppress this affective interchange, the reader is charged with being attentive to its presence. In so doing, reading is experienced as a

constant process of deferral as each reading depends upon the complicated dynamic and exchange between reader and text. Reading becomes less about interpretation and meaning and more about our 'active intervention in the textual process' (Pearce, 1997:10). Pearce notes that this can be an empowering sensation. All we require are the bare bones of a structure; a discourse we can recognise and we are enabled (as long as we are open to it) to supplant ourselves into the text and repopulate it with fragments of our own identity. The text is experienced as a relation in which we are directly involved, rather than an individual entity. A good deal of readerly pleasure can be derived from this affective interchange but it also heightens the probability of 'becoming' with the text, a rather different proposition to that of scouring a text for meaning. Implicated reading demands we remain open to, and purposefully experience inter-textuality.

Alongside centralising the reader-text relationship, another task for the implicated reader is to actively seek new ways of experiencing texts through their relationship with others. Like Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, texts (in the form of research data or otherwise) are always open and connectable (Alvermann, 2000). It is through these connections that I hope to identify possible ruptures or discontinuities in my previous smooth tracings of the research data. I hope to notice what would have otherwise gone 'unthought'.

In what follows, and in the style of Alvermann (2000), I will ask what the texts do to each other, as well as to myself. I will acknowledge the affective alongside the cognitive. In doing so, I interweave extracts from texts with reflections on the nature of the intertextual relations they produce. Commentaries are provided to navigate the reader (and writer) through the process of becoming the experiment generates.

The texts I have chosen are varied; from poetry, to research texts, to film. The rationale underpinning the selection process for the texts becomes clear in the reading of what follows.

**Note:** In order to distinguish between the layers of text, the various forms of writing are presented in different fonts as follows:

Extracts from selected texts are italicised.

Reflections/re-memories are in bold.

Commentaries, which aim to provide 'a theoretical framework through which to make connections across the different readings' and reflections (Pearce, 1997:85) are in regular print.

## **The implicated read**

### **Star Trek – First Contact: The Motion Picture (1996)**

**My affection for the Star Trek franchise has been longstanding. Initially, it was a 'forced' relationship. My parents, but particularly my dad, were fans. The popular television series and its various spin-offs were part of my family's after school/work routine: a 'TV-dinner', followed by, on a Wednesday, an episode of Star Trek on BBC2. As the franchise evolved, my appreciation of the science-fiction format grew. Unlike my dad, I wasn't particularly keen on the 'science'; I had limited interest in whether 'warp-speed' could eventually be achieved or in unpicking the flawed physics on which human transportation was predicated. The 'fiction' though, was, and is, a wonderful one. Set in the twenty-fourth century, the series follows the adventures of Starfleet personnel; the space-borne armada of the United Federation of Planets. The 'Federation' epitomise an ethically and morally evolved 'humanity',<sup>41</sup> for example, it is desire for the betterment of all, through the creation of universal harmony, that drives human (and non-human) endeavour – money no longer exists. Whilst,**

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<sup>41</sup> Humanity is encapsulated in inverted commas to indicate the limits of the word in describing the members of the Federation. Space and time travel have enabled cross-world multiculturalism and so the Federation is made up of a variety of life forms not exclusively 'human'.

generally speaking, the Federation have done well in their efforts to bring peacefulness and equality between and within all worlds and races, there remains several species that continue to stubbornly fight the Federation's cause, usually in the belief of their own supremacy. It is one such 'enemy race' that the plot of the motion picture *Star Trek: First Contact* revolves around. They are Borg.<sup>42</sup>

I think Borg are fascinating. A collective: one mind, one purpose, no individual identity. They serve as a frightening reminder of the possibility and prospect of being and becoming 'institutionalised'. Schools are often criticised as places where creativity, uniqueness and independence of thought are suppressed; where institutional mores outweigh the needs and wants of the individual. Borg are this fear of schooling realised to the extreme. My mind wanders back to the last primary school in which I worked. The building was old; Victorian and spread across three levels. To ensure the safety of the children, classes were patrolled during transitions, both by teachers and head boys and girls. The expected formation of single file and silent movement was rearticulated for those that fell out of step with the oft heard bark; 'one behind the other, no talking!' It took far too long for me to realise the ridiculousness of such a system and its tenuous causal relationship to safety. In the fantasy world of the Federation, for those facing assimilation, resistance is apparently futile (although Captain Picard and his team disprove the rule with their efforts to 'take back' the Enterprise). For children, opportunities for resistance to the seemingly ridiculous are everywhere. We expend a lot of energy trying to control resistant impulses. How often are these efforts wasted? Perhaps this energy needs to be refocused?

Re-reading the *Star Trek* text, either in film format, or reading through transcripts, evokes in me a range of emotive and cognitive responses; clearly I

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<sup>42</sup> Please see Appendix F for additional information on the plot and main characters, including a more detailed description of the characteristics of Borg.

am deeply implicated in the text. It and I have a history and this history connects the text to my developing self; from adolescence, through to my teacher educator self. It is difficult to separate the text from my various intra-textual selves, as each reading conjures up previous readings and responses based on past and sometimes lost, contexts. Pearce describes this sensation thus:

...to return to this text is to return to the ghosts of all my former intra-textual selves: the reader positioning I have occupied at different stages of my own personal growth and development: selves I can never inhabit again.

(1997:97)

In the reflection above, it seems evident that the text calls forth my teacher self, but particularly my primary school teacher self. I refer to the collective 'we' – both I and my students are primary school teachers. I realise that I do this often in the written feedback I provide for students on their assessed writing, usually in the form of agreement or disputation with arguments they have presented, such as; *'I agree, too often **we** overlook what children require in these circumstances...'* In reality, 'we' no longer exists, my role is as an onlooker only; an advisor. My practice in regard to the impact I have on children's lives and learning is third party. I wonder if this is the unconscious result of my harking back to a short lived career as a teacher, which, on the whole, I miss. Perhaps I find comfort in the collective teacher 'we'. Equally as likely, the 'we' could be a savvy pedagogic device. Positioning myself as 'one of them' gives me credibility; I bridge the metaphorical gap between theory and practice (see chapters 2 and 3). I am at once a primary school teacher and an academic.

Whatever the reason, I believe that, in the main, my response to the text in the reflection presented above is characterised by my more recent relationship with it as an academic. This relationship, despite my emotional/personal connection to the text, has seen me couch my responses cognitively – relying on my academic mind to derive associations to theoretical concepts of interest. I have

used the text many times in teaching and in doing so, my academic self has drawn me to the Borg as signifiers of institutionalisation, conformity, power and resistance – all concepts I have dealt with in earlier chapters of this thesis. Whilst I have found much within my reading of Borg to illuminate the subtleties of difference in my own texts, the thought of balancing the cognitive with the emotional (instead of allowing one to suppress the other) impelled a re-reading of a small extract from the film that I had previously overlooked.

*(Security parties led by Captain Picard and Data patrol the corridors on Deck 16. Their assignment is to 'take back' the Enterprise from the Borg. The scene opens with the discovery of Borg cubicles, where several Borg are 'recharging'.)*

*Data: Captain, I believe I am feeling ...anxiety. It's an intriguing sensation. A most distracting...*

*Picard: Data, I'm sure it's a fascinating experience. Perhaps you should deactivate your emotion chip for now.*

*Data: Good idea, sir. ...Done.*

*Picard: Data, there are times when I envy you.*

(Star Trek: First Contact, 1996:0:31:05 - 0:31:27)

**In this scene, Captain Picard of the enterprise can be seen/heard interacting with his Federation colleague, Data<sup>43</sup>. Data is in fact an android, who, fully sentient, functions on a (near) human level. Over the duration of his existence he has developed a longing to become 'more human', a goal which has led him to accept the installation of an 'emotion chip', thus allowing him to experience the full range of human emotion to which he had previously been oblivious. The chip can be deactivated manually by Data with just a slight nod of his head. The anxiety Data experiences in anticipation of his battle with the Borg is quickly quashed after Picard suggests that the chip be deactivated – in the context of the anticipated battle, this is a state of being the Captain envies. I wonder to what extent I have 'deactivated' my capacity or willingness to engage with an emotional**

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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix F for a full character profile of Data including psychological assessment reports.

**response to the texts I have drawn upon in teaching. In fact, the more I think of it, the more I am sure that within my own practice, not only do I fail to highlight this dimension, but, at least as far as an emotional affective response is concerned, I often actively encourage its suppression. After all, emotions cloud judgement and our ability to make sense of what we experience. As for Data in the extract above, emotions are a distraction. They potentially limit our capacity to think and act usefully.**

Pearce (1997) describes 'professional reading' (where the emotional dimension is marginalised or ignored) as a Western, educated, patriarchal obsession, where the purpose of reading is solely evaluation and interpretation – the job of the reader to explain and justify their extractions, a role which I often make explicit for my students as they read their own written accounts of experience. Take this small extract from a transcript of a teaching session where I explain to a group of students the task of scrutinising their journal entries/reflections on practice:

*Me: Right, what I want you to do now is to be as creative and to be as open to different versions [of events] as you possibly can be. Be constantly aware that there is one version that despite ourselves, we will constantly be drawn towards because that is the one that we are so accustomed to. Try to think about another version. Does that make sense, what I'm asking you to do?...What do you think is happening in the data/the story you are telling about your practice? The point is you've got to be able to justify and explain it.*

The task I am explaining here is clearly one of interpretation ('*What is happening in the story you are telling about your practice?*'). I alert students to the dangers of assigning meaning too readily and to our/their predisposition to certain notions and interpretations of events. I wanted to encourage the students to loosen their fixations on absolutes and certainties and instead look for alternative readings that had hitherto remained unthought. The extract is from a session in which I used *The Rainbow Fish* (Pfister, 1996) as a text against which the students could read their own reflective pieces. In doing so, I wanted the students to consider how the texts connected with one another.

The connection with self however is/was underplayed. Through my recourse to the language of explanation, justification and interpretation my explanation of the task implies only the need to draw upon one's professional self as a resource for reading, the value of an emotional, personal response remains unattended to.

The very idea that my practice might be underpinned by a 'Western, educated, patriarchal obsession' (Pearce, 1997) clearly is not one that is going to sit well with me. Shaking off humanistic tendencies is not an easy job. If a nomadic journey requires the searching out of places and spaces other than those that are traditionally associated with research, I now wonder whether the affective space might be one such space. For example, at its very simplest, I might have chosen to ask the students how reading their reflective accounts made them feel. What opening up these accounts and therefore the experiences that underlie them to scrutiny, did to them. But I did not. This takes me back to my original research question in which I use the word 'value' and I wonder how I might have quietly and unintentionally bound and coded this criterion within the confines of cognition. I now ask what value might there be in an emotional response – shock, pleasure, joy, fear. Are these of value in the teacher educator's classroom? Ultimately, I realise that I have striated the written space in many ways – my attempts to liberate students' writing practices, enforce a particular formation of liberation.

*Interview transcript:*

*Student P: It just made me engage more with your sessions because the references you were using were ones that I could recognise and appreciate – I know that some people don't like Star Trek or have never seen Amélie but, you know, as soon as you mentioned that I was like all wow, I know about this, I'm going to talk about this with authority – so you know that really made me prick up my ears.*

In my original analysis of the interview transcripts (see Chapter 7), I used the extract from Student P to justify my theme of 'relating to the texts'. Student P's response to the question in interview was one of a selection of excerpts I strung together in an attempt to extract from the data conclusions regarding the success of the interventions I had devised. In the extraction, I interpreted



and evaluated the words of the participants. I now ask, what would happen if I 'reactivated' my emotion chip? Reading the extract of data again, against the Star Trek transcript and with an eye on the retaking of affect, I offer the following reflections.

**This is text I enjoy. I enjoy Student P's response to my original question of: 'Did any of these [popular culture] texts help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently?' Student P's description of a bodily reaction to the content – his ears pricking up, might be idiomatic, but it awakens my mind's eye. I can see his frame rise, his neck crane towards me as he listens – this is an exciting pedagogic encounter and I have created it. He uses the word 'wow'. In turn, I think, 'wow' – I made someone think wow. For that second, in that seminar, I captured them (or at least him). These are the bare bones of teaching; its secret underbelly. 'We' love teaching because 'we' love this affect. The joy of the moment when a child 'gets it'; the excitement and anticipation generated by the locked mystery trunk the children see on the carpet as they enter the classroom (unbeknownst to them laid purposefully by the teacher during morning preparations). Is this not why 'we' teach? Do I enjoy the text because it allows me to relive the sensation of joy and excitement that the pedagogic encounter can create? Maybe. As a practitioner, I store these moments. They are my resource bank of 'feel good', to access when the demands of teaching and learning (in every sense) seem either too stifling or just plainly unenjoyable. In this way they spur me on – is this not use/value?**

This brings me to another extract of interview data scrutinised for its apparent signification of 'relating to the texts' in Chapter 7:

*Student M: ...the Grease one, I've never been in that situation, I've never felt pressured to try and be this person, you know, I'd rather be the loner than to fit in with something, so I couldn't relate to that.*

In my original analysis I focus on the qualities of the 'relationship' the student's response assumes. In this case, I conclude that rather than familiarity with the textual representation as a whole, it is the student's inability to identify or find an affinity with the characters depicted within it that defines her initial response as to the usefulness of the implicated read activities. In the extended transcript of the interview (included in Appendix A) we can see that the interview goes on as follows:

*Me: Oh, Ok, so that's a good point. So, your ability to relate to the texts that were offered depended on the content of the....*

*Student M: I suppose I really liked them because it was like the visual as well and it got really good discussions, I don't think, it didn't make me think in a way that I wouldn't think anyway, but yeah, obviously we did... because we were prompted to unpick it, dissect it, so obviously I wouldn't ... if I was watching Amélie... I wasn't looking for those things but then you think 'oh yeah', but I wouldn't initially have.*

*Me: So, it made you look at the media thing that I offered you differently but it didn't make you look at your own teaching or writing differently?*

*Student M: No*

I would now like to attempt a re-reading of the Student M transcript against the following extract from a poem by Carol Ann Duffy (2002) called The Map-Woman.<sup>44</sup>

*So one day, wondering where to go next,  
she went back, drove a car for a night and day,  
till the town appeared on her left, the stale cake  
of the castle crumbled up on the hill; and she hired  
a room with a view and soaked in the bath.  
When it grew dark, she went out, thinking  
she knew the place like the back of her hand,  
but something was wrong. She got lost in arcades,  
in streets with new names, in precincts  
and walkways, and found that what was familiar*

*was only façade. Back in her hotel room, she stripped  
and lay on the bed. As she slept, her skin sloughed  
like a snake's, the skin of her legs like stockings, silvery,  
sheer, like the long gloves of the skin of her arms,  
the papery camisole from her chest a perfect match*

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<sup>44</sup> For a fuller version of the text, please see Appendix F.

*for the tissue socks of the skin of her feet. Her sleep  
peeled her. Lifted a honeymoon thong from her groin,  
a delicate bra of skin from her breasts, and all of it  
patterned A to Z; a small cross where her parents' skulls  
grinned at the dark. Her new skin showed barely a mark.*

*She woke and spread the map out on the floor. What  
was she looking for? Her skin was her own small ghost,  
a shroud to be dead in, a newspaper for old news  
to be read in, gift-wrapping, litter, a suicide letter.  
She left it there, got dressed, checked out, got in the car.  
As she drove, the town in the morning sun glittered  
behind her. She ate up the miles. Her skin itched,  
like a rash, like a slow burn, felt stretched, as though  
it belonged to someone else. Deep in the bone  
old streets tunnelled and borrowed, hunting for home.*

**The Map-Woman implicates me in several ways. It is not an isolated text, in that I cannot separate it from a chain of other texts (fiction, non-fiction, academic, poetry, prose, film, documentary) that have been influential in my feminist education. I initially picked up the book of poems at a second-hand stall for no other reason than its title ('Feminine Gospels'). I have no particular interest in poetry, but intrigued by the coupling of a subject very familiar to me; gender, with the relatively unfamiliar form of poetry, I decided to give it a go. This, as it turned out, is a text I have made serious 'use' of. Readings have including solitary affairs, communal discussion forums (feminist book club) and pedagogic experimentations (with varied intentions, I have read The Map-Woman to/with several seminar groups). The Map-Woman for me is the stand-out piece of the collection. I have no literary credentials on which to base this conclusion, I simply like it the best. It is a text I feel easily 'drawn into'. The content can be quickly summarised. The body of the central protagonist – 'The Map-Woman' is covered with an intricate map of 'the town where she'd grown from a child' (Duffy, 2002). Over the course of the poem's 13 versus, Duffy navigates the reader around the map, relaying the stories that the various places on the imprinted skin evoke, in, what**

**we assume, is the map-woman's consciousness/memory. Verse 11, with which the extract above begins, signals a shift to the woman's present as we accompany her on a visit back to the town the map depicts.**

**The Map-Woman is an interesting focus text because although I have engaged with it within various contexts, my response to it, regardless of place or purpose is, I think, best characterised as always existing at the intersection of the cognitive and affective. By this, I mean to say, my reaction to the piece has always been a muddled amalgamation of the two types of reading Pearce (1997) identifies in her summation of reader-response theory. The text works on me in two ways simultaneously, one of which I allude to in my initial reflection above, where I liken my readerly engagement with the text with being 'drawn into' it. I wonder if this sensation is perhaps one that more avid readers of poetry are familiar with and that perhaps it is as a result of poetic convention; the purposeful creation of a skilful poet – word arrangement, imagery, rhythm and form are created with precision for just this purpose. The affective dimension to my reading however is, I believe, more than this, as it is also the case that, in the reading of The Map-Woman, the textual-other is easy to find. Pearce states that;**

**...the emotional fabric of the reading process depends very much on an interweaving of textual and extratextual associations, as some cue in the text prompts us to the scripting of a parallel text based on some aspect of our personal or intertextual experiences.**

**(1997:9)**

**The creation of a parallel text is, for me, an effortless 'line of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004). The 'extratextual associations' are plentiful. My contemplations of 'self' and the part our biographies play in the construction of identity have been commented upon elsewhere**

in this thesis. These contemplations are as much personal as they are professional endeavours and my reading of *The Map-Woman* allows me to interweave both with the seductive addition of 'place' to further romanticise the experience. St. Pierre (2000) discusses the power of our association to place in her own nomadic enquiry commenting on Welty's (1956, cited in St. Pierre, 2000) suggestion that we attach ourselves to places (and, I would argue, our memories of them) because of their lasting and stable identities. She quotes De Certeau,

*...places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories, held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolization encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body.*

(1984, cited in St. Pierre, 2000:259)

There is, I think, a suggestion of indulgence implicit in De Certeau's words – possibly of the same kind we associate with nostalgia or psychoanalysis (the latter of which Deleuze and Guattari's critique with sustained and outspoken vigour, Goodchild, 1996). However, whatever the morality or purposefulness of the process, it is clearly an affective one.

Paradoxically, the poetic form of *The Map-Woman* also instigates a series of hermeneutic responses, as my academic/scholarly instincts, urge me towards interpretation. What does the shedding of the skin mean? Is there a caution here against nostalgia? What does the return of the map ('deep in the bone...') imply? Reading *The Map-Woman* then, is a somewhat peculiar process as the various readings jostle against each other. To complicate this further, I am eager to consider where a reading of the text against the transcript of Student M's interview might take me. I remind the reader that in all likelihood, this reading will also occur at the intersection of the cognitive and affective.

**After returning to her hometown, and whilst she sleeps, Duffy's map-woman sheds her skin; her map. She is unconscious of the act but perhaps it is the result or consequence of her return to a place she thought she knew but found unfamiliar. The skin is described as a shroud to be dead in; a small ghost, and, as if to confirm its restrictive nature or lack of worth, once shed, it is unceremoniously left behind in the hotel room where she slept. Yet, it seems that ultimately the act causes the woman physical discomfort, her skin itches and burns, the streets burrow around inside of her looking for home; a place to take root and establish themselves.**

What sense can I make of all this against the extract from my interview with Student M? Re-reading the two texts alongside each other was a revealing process. A couple of things occurred when working, as Alvermann (2000) suggests, 'at the surface' of the readings. Reading at the surface is defined by Dimitriadis and Kamberelis as the process of;

..."creating" possible realities by producing new articulations of disparate phenomena, connecting the exteriority of objects to whatever tones or directions seem potentially related to them.

(Cited in Alvermann, 2000:116)

Re-reading Student M's interview, as well as the writing she produced for the assessment of the unit, I was drawn to what I would describe as the rhizomatic nature of her talk – something I missed in my initial readings. In conversation, and as subtly played out in the beginnings of our exchange above, Student M makes a series of unusual and interesting connections between the stimuli she is offered. She uses the interview space quite differently to several of the other participants. (It is worth noting perhaps, that both her interviews are the longest in duration.) Rather than respond to questions with languidity, she takes advantage of the opportunity to pursue lines of thought our conversation opens up. Like the rhizome, it seems that without intercession, Student M might 'ceaselessly [establish] connections between semiotic chains, organisations of

power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/2004:8). Her response takes her quickly from texts to past experience, to textual other, to self-declaration. Re-reading her responses to the questions I posed and the subsequent discussion between us, there seems to be several points at which Student M's chain of thought inter-splices with her internal compilation of statements of self, accumulations of experiences and, in the example above, textual offerings. On reflection, I wonder now if this might, of itself, qualify as rhizomatous. It is also interesting to note that Alvermann acknowledges a similar realisation in her own rhizoanalysis, remarking that all along;

...the adolescents [involved in her original research study] had been engaging in a rhizomatous literacy practice of their own making... it simply took the rhizoanalysis to draw attention to that fact.

(2000:125)

Re-readings also suggest that in contrast to Student M, perhaps I am less rhizomatic in my approach. As the map-woman discovers the gap between representation and actuality, she abandons/lets go of what had hitherto remained a constant feature of her person – the problem is of course that it creeps back in. The two texts alongside each other cause me to wonder to what extent my research and scholarly past burrow within and as a result constrain my attempts to rethink the teaching and learning experiences that student writing can provide. In the interview extracts above, my attempts to claw back the focus of Student M's talk to ensure 'an answer to the question' now seems a somewhat desperate attempt to (re)shape the responses of my participant into what I consider to be 'authentic utterances' and thus 'keeping the situation tied to strong categorical relationships' (Roy, 2003:113). I revert back to my research and teacher beginnings (finding answers for questions) and lose sight of the possibilities and connectivities presented in the encounter. Student M uses the moment to tell me something about how she responds to texts. My response, in turn, is to summarise and rearticulate her utterances in my own words.

The exchange is an example of the classic teaching and learning questioning device known as 'initiation-response-feedback' (IRF). It is used commonly in teaching children and is generally preferred over 'initiation-response-evaluation' (IRE – where the teacher evaluates the student's response for its supposed merit), as the student/s learn more from having their responses clarified and rephrased as it apparently ensures a 'shared understanding' (Dawes, 2004, cited in Pollard, 2014). Whilst a valid pedagogic device in the classroom, in the context of the research interview (in its own way, a pedagogic encounter), I miss a trick. My decision to leave the traditions of scholarly past behind me is a conscious one, but the root-tree still burrows and looks for a home. Here, it finds one in my continued attempts to recover and affirm answers – the exchange ultimately culminating in a solitary, definitive 'no', of arguably little use or purpose. I consummately dismiss Student M's search for the 'textual-other'; ironic, given my own propensity for conjuring her up in the process of my own implicated reading. Roy notes that;

...part of the challenge of an innovative curriculum is to continually turn situations into learning opportunities; we must produce curriculum in conjunction with becoming.

(2003: 113)

My inability to do so here, strikes me as being worthy of further consideration, especially in relation to my own teaching and the 'delivery' of teaching and learning activities of alternative design. Deleuze and Guattari alert us to the dynamic relationship between smooth and striated spaces, reminding us that 'smooth space is constantly being translated into a striated space [and] striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to smooth space' (1987/2004:474). I wonder now how vigilant I am to this transgressive nature, both within the confines of the interview exchange (as above), but more broadly within the innumerable interactions that occur as part and parcel of the teaching and learning situation. I take up this concern for further discussion in Chapter 11.



## Concluding thoughts

As the thesis meanders towards its final chapters, I would like to take this opportunity to both take stock of the effect of the current chapter, but also to ponder more generally on points of significance that have emerged in this, the final leg, of my doctoral study. Firstly, I admit to having found the writing of this chapter all at once, challenging, perplexing and worrying. I have no idea of what the reader will make of it and the fear that I am flirting with disaster has presided over my efforts, to the extent where I have felt that on occasion, this implicated read has been dragged out of me... (what kind of doctoral thesis draws on Star Trek as a resource? This is ridiculous. I can't do this... stop... it will be fine... start again.) Throwing out the blueprint for 'data analysis' and relying only on the company of a small and select group of contemporary writers as guides (Alvermann, Pearce and to some extent St. Pierre), has left me acutely aware of the implications of traversing smooth space. With just a borrowed and adapted structure, and so little to rely on in terms of familiarity, I have been forced into creating my own topology – this can be a disorientating experience and in writing, I often found myself, like the rhizome, at junctures with no obvious route of progression, having to force myself to think one up, returning to the texts time and again for inspiration. As a result, the process often felt trite and artificial. Normally I would consider these characteristics with suspicion (as in my recollections of the writing of Chapter 7 above) but in this instance it occurs to me that without a pre-coded space onto which you might plot your route, you have no option but to force yourself into creating something from scratch, disorientation it seems, is therefore inevitable. To be in this position is potentially exhilarating yet it also plays on your vulnerabilities; exacerbates self-doubt. It is also true that not all the decisions I made along the way proved to be successful, or even, in retrospect, theoretically justifiable. For instance, the typologies of text I used to illustrate the varied qualities and purposes of the texts I read against each other (indicated by the varied font types and explained in the paragraphs prior to the start of the implicated read above) in the end, proved to be too much of an artificial distinction, creating

false boundaries between text types that were impossible to maintain. Ultimately, I allowed the texts types to drift and merge with each other without too much restraint; it seemed distinctly un-rhizomatic to attempt anything else.

However, I am comforted by the realisation that whilst it may not have been easy to produce, rhizomatic writing does seem to create the conditions that allow for the researcher to release unanticipated potential in “data” that otherwise may have been left unthought; unexploited. Some of this potential has been realised in relatively minor ways (for example, particular texts evoking the joy and excitement of pedagogic encounter, or the use of the pronoun ‘we’ as a positioning device) but elsewhere I feel what has emerged to be significant both in relation to the remainder of this thesis but also to practice more generally. This impact will be explored more substantially in the final chapter.

I am also conscious of the fact that in much of this chapter I have referred to ‘affect’ in Pearce’s terms and in relation to reader-response theory. However, in Deleuzian praxis, the word is used to denote something other than the ‘emotional hinterland’ (Pearce, 1997) beyond our conditioned hermeneutic responses. Indeed, of affect, Deleuze and Guattari write;

It is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of the power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel.

(1987:240-41, cited in Roy, 2003: 102)

In such terms, I do consider that the implicated read had affect. I have ‘reeled’ for example, from the realisation that rhizomatic practice is as much about ways of becoming, as it is about ways of doing – reeling from the fact that I overlooked it in the first place; reeling from my ignorance of its presence without deliberate provocation; reeling from the possibilities presented in the rhizomatic potential embedded in the teaching and learning encounters that I have yet to experience.

## Chapter 10: A Play with Voices

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The title of this chapter is influenced by Davies' 'Life in Kings Cross: A play of voices' in Jackson and Mazzei's edited volume, 'Voice in Qualitative Inquiry' (2009). My adapted version is meant to indicate that whilst not conceived as a 'play' in the theatrical sense, the chapter does 'play' in the sense of the word as follows: play: 'to exercise or employ oneself in diversion' (Dictionary.com, 2014a:online).

In the previous chapter, I re-presented data alongside other textual material, in order that I might rethink analysis. In doing so, I looked to authors whose work had inspired me to think past the confines of qualitative empirical work and seek out alternative structures or 'methods' that would allow for the "data" to act differently. I intend to continue this endeavour in the present chapter but rather than re-present data, I would like to take the opportunity provided in this, the penultimate chapter of my thesis, to allow some of the yet unused data, to enjoy a doctoral outing of its own.

As in Chapter 9, the present chapter is inspired by a series of questions, posed on this occasion, not to 'the text' (see chapters 3 and 9) but to the researcher herself. In her plenary keynote address, to the Summer Institute in Qualitative Research 2013, Lisa Mazzei encouraged the delegates in attendance to think of data as 'agentic'. Rather than imagining data to be an 'inert and indifferent mass' (MacLure, 2013) that yields to the will of the researcher, we are asked to think of data as having the ability to act upon, as well as being subjected to action (see my discussion of the agency of data in Chapter 8). In the 'normal' run of things, the researcher examines, codes and interprets the data; this relationship is unilateral. Mazzei, however envisages a bilateral relationship where the researcher is;

...produced in a mutual becoming of analysis and representation with, in, through participants in research narratives, as movement passing through bodies that produce us as becoming selves.

(2013: presentation)

Thinking of, and with, “data” in this way, I believe demands the kinds of cognitive and affective processes on behalf of the researcher that I have attempted to hone in this latter part of my thesis. As Mazzei explains:

It is not to treat data as something to be mined, nor is it to ascribe meaning by sticking to things and words, but it is to approach the production of voice and subjectivity as a material practice that happens in the between-the-two of researcher and data.

(2012: online)

To aid the researcher in their approach, Mazzei provides a series of questions as provocations to the researcher engaged in qualitative work, two of which are of particular interest to me here: ‘What are the data doing?’ and, ‘How am I made by data?’

It is not my intention here to suggest answers to Mazzei’s questions, rather I regard the questions as enabling an experiential response to a concern or quandary I share with Richardson (2000): ‘How does what we write, affect who we become?’ If the ways we are supposed to write research, as illustrated in Chapter 7, remains an unexamined trope in our claims to/for authoritative knowing, then we become in Foucault’s (1977) terms ‘docile’. ‘Experimental, transgressive writing’ (Davies, 2009) acts not only to broaden the field in terms of what might constitute qualitative research, but also serves as a vehicle for my own resistive act against the onset of docility. This is not to say that one treatment or conception of data is necessarily preferable, more just, or ethical than the other, (although these arguments have been made and will be examined in further detail below) but rather that ‘the other’ is simply required to dislodge the hegemonic authority of one, over and above all else. To this end, and cognisant of the fact that uncoupling myself from the standard treatment of data for analysis involves a process of de-disciplining that requires

method and practice executed with a somewhat exhausting and highly improbable state of constant vigilance, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to the task of knowing differently through thinking and writing data agentially.

## **The Play**

My approach in this chapter is heavily influenced by the work of both Mazzei, whom I have already referenced, but also Bronwyn Davies, from whose chapter 'Life in Kings Cross: A play of voices' (2009) I have taken much inspiration. In this text, Davies (ibid.) attempts to experience and experiment with a Deleuzian approach to writing and in doing so, brings two Deleuzian principles into being: the first; discarding the self-conscious "I" and the second; writing on an imminent plane of composition. The chapter is an excellent example of a writer/researcher actively experimenting with how writing might facilitate the process of 'coming to know differently' and one which I have personally found inspirational. Davies writes against the grain of dominant discourses, challenging the authorial voice of habitualised social science; one that runs the risk of colonising the lives of those that the research/er claims to know (2009:200). As ostensibly a piece of ethnographic work, Davies embarks upon a process of coming to know a place, the community that populates it and the culture they have created there, without running the risk of exploiting its inhabitants, writing that place as her own or confining the place to a known set of quantifiable and static truths. She achieves this using fiction to animate the lives of people, so they are rendered no longer strange to the reader but neither possessed by, nor subservient to, the writer. In this version of ethnography, the writer is not the centre of events. The data is a play (written for radio) of fictional characters, each connected to an actual place in different ways. Each character appears in his or her separate world, but is also singularly or as a result of their interactions with others, a manifestation of the place they inhabit. Of engaging in this process, Davies writes the following:

The writing itself thus opens up the writer to becoming what is not yet known and to what can never be contained in words, or completely known.

(2009:198)

If I am honest, I can admit to being unsure about what Davies's 'not yet known' might look like. I am aware though that perhaps this is the point. I am comfortable with the Deleuzian concept of becoming. (Please see Chapter 4 for further explanation.) However, to what extent or how I experience becoming as a writer is something of an unknown quantity. Becoming is a mysterious entity. It grows and creeps in all directions, lacking a definitive, knowable form; constantly moving; transforming. In this way, I recognise becoming as often occurring without one realising it. For the purposes of this chapter however, I would like to attempt to confront and experience becoming consciously. In writing 'against the grain', I allow the opportunity to both experience becoming through difference, but also to experience that becoming consciously and viscerally.

In order then to experience this becoming, I too shall attempt to write into being two key Deleuzian principles. The first, I borrow directly from Davies; the discarding of the self-conscious "I". The second is a concept that I introduce here for the first time – that of desire. Having spent the last year or so attempting to read and make sense of Deleuze and Guattari's work, as well as becoming more familiar with a range of poststructuralist theorists who have used Deleuzo-Guattarian principles as a basis for empirical and theoretical work, I have been aware of the presence of 'desire', but without, until recently at least, really considering its implications for my own research/writing/practice. In preparation for writing the current chapter however, iterations of the concept in the various places I had happened upon it, began to chime more audibly with the questions and quandaries on which my thinking is based. The chimes signalled a possible significance, but the thoughts were too fragmented to make sense of. My writing in what follows constitutes an attempt to organise my thinking on desire and see what it might do for my writing and research.

Beforehand though, I will return to the initial principle of discarding the self-conscious "I".

## **Principle 1**

According to Davies, discarding the self-conscious "I" is;

...integral to the process of opening oneself to difference and the movement of language, voice and subjectivity to the as-yet-unknown.

(2009:198)

Probably because I am currently in the throes of renovated a not-so-recently purchased house, I liken the renunciation of this "I" as an action similar to that of sanding down a door or a piece of furniture before it is repainted or varnished. The sanding is a necessary preliminary process; it lays the foundation for the fresh coat of paint. The sanding ensures a 'key' – fine cracks or fractures to which the new paint adheres. In writing, the "I" that I have claimed as my own, as one who knows itself and is known by others as one that has an identity, is an "I" unto which agentic "data" revealed in transgressive and experimental work won't adhere. This is because the self-conscious "I" is the "I" of the authorial voice of qualitative research; one which is;

...dogged by the need to present itself as the one who knows, and in particular the one who knows authoritatively.

(Davies, 1996, cited in Davies, 2009:199)

In submitting to the authorial voice, the researcher is bogged down by the need to present what is already known and the endeavour becomes one of convincing the reader to buy into the illusion that the world can be fixed from a single perspective (ibid.). In doing so, the productive value of the text is high, but (purposefully) obscured. In pondering my would-be liberation from the self-conscious "I" I have extracted two points of significance. The first is that, and as Jackson and Mazzei draw our attention to, the "I" is self-conscious when it is evoked unproblematically. So, for example, this "I" might emerge where the author attempts to present the illusion of an "I" that is the centre of events,

who is able to see, decipher and know the world as a result of their presence within it. I would like to argue that whilst I have certainly evoked what I would describe as the narrative "I", I would like to think I have not done so 'unproblematically' (see examples in chapters 3 and 8) and so disregarding the self-consciousness of the "I", is not, for me, an entirely novel departure.

In their critique of the self-conscious "I", Jackson and Mazzei (2008) offer an alternative practice or perspective in the form of what they refer to as 'the performative "I"'. This, they explain, is a becoming "I" – returning us to the quandary posed by Richardson earlier in this chapter, of the possibility of writing effecting what we become. Indeed, 'becoming' is the *raison d'être* of the performative "I". It is actively constructed in its attempts at truth telling. This "I" cannot be known in advance. It is not stable. It is always situated by and unfolds within the act of narration.

[It] has the potential to produce evocative, ethical and failed practices that result in a telling with the potential to open the gaps and produce different knowing.

(Jackson and Mazzei, 2008:314)

Deleuze (1968/2004) conceptualises this "I" as a subject that embodies a series of processes and a place in which thoughts can emerge. It is an emergent "I". This is the kind of "I" I like to work with. It is an exciting and hopeful "I". In order that I might further disrupt my use of the self-conscious "I" and become performative, I will need to exploit the limits of experience by positioning an "I" that becomes through the telling (*ibid.*). Whilst this feels somewhat 'chicken and egg' in nature, I undertake the challenge.

In writing about student writing, as I am, the normal tendency would be to take said students' writing, and, from the perspective of one that 'knows', courtesy perhaps of the author's own reading, writing, coding and organising, subject the students' writing or data, to analysis. This process can be seen in my earlier writing, as in Chapter 2. As an alternative, I will instead write the "data" as a play. In doing so, my intention in respect to realising the performative "I" can be broken down as follows:



- The play forefronts the act of writing by using fiction to animate the participants. In doing so, I forego the tendency to present my analysis as 'real' or authoritative.
- The play presents writing as a place and space that cannot be captured. The intention is to render this space less strange to both the writer (me) and the reader (you) as the play unfolds.
- In focussing on the place and space of writing, I resist the urge to present data as either disembodied, or as belonging to the researcher. It is as much the students, as it is mine as it is yours.
- My task as a writer is thus to see/hear/think the folds in the experiential fabric as I move through it as I go on becoming with/in it.

## **Principle 2: desire**

Returning to the second guiding principle of the play, I would like to firstly explain the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of desire, as it is somewhat different to that which I had previously understood by the term, which was, generally speaking, framed by the Lacanian tradition of 'desire as a lack'. Without wishing to instigate a detour into psychoanalytic territory, briefly I understood desire as; 'subjected to lack, so that [she] always desires what [she] lacks, and cannot desire anything without lacking something' (Goodchild, 1996:124 -125).

In this way, desire is understood as the want of something one does not currently have. Importantly, this 'want' is constructed externally, in other words, we are influenced by and submissive to the structures that govern us. These structures (whatever they might be and in the case of the Oedipus complex on which the Lacanian theory of desire is based, they are family structure and the law) generate our desires by defining what is legitimate and proper and conversely, what is illegitimate and improper. Whilst, the Oedipal unconscious, is not my 'go to' interpretative framework for making sense of the meaning of desire, this explanation, at its most basic, is one which I think I have readily assimilated into my everyday understanding.

For Deleuze and Guattari however, desire occupies a different tessiture, in that there is a move away from a concern for what desire means (as with the above) and a move towards what desire does. Their focus is on the productive nature of desire; both how and what it produces are of concern, as well as the process by which these relations occur. In this way, desire is seen as a force and a powerful force at that, it has the ability to generate power, privilege, voice, silence, action, inaction and so on. The task instigated by desire is therefore not to seek out what was lacking, but to understand the interests that produced it in the first place and furthermore, what that desire seeks in itself to produce and/or protect. We must ask therefore;

...what are the desiring machines that we are plugging into and that are plugging into them/us to produce this desire practice?

(Jackson and Mazzei, 2012: 86)

This conception of desire is interesting to me for several reasons. I believe it is highly useful when considering both my own, as well as the writing practices of my students. I wonder to what extent desire produces maintenance of hegemonic and normative practices. Traditionally my understanding of desire in relation to writing practices was limited to the metaphorical gap between what we have or are able to know and do now, and what we might know, do, think, say and so on, in our imagined futures. This lack fuelled the conception of progress as described in Chapter 2. Deleuzo-Guattarian desire is a generative force (so seemingly not so dissimilar), however here the focus shifts from what that desire is, to how it functions. Thus, the questions that need to be asked are, how does desire function to produce (written) practice? And, how does it work and who is it working for? From such a perspective, it might be argued, that in relation to both the students and my own writing, desire works to drive us to produce more of what we already have available. The desire is to maintain, or for students just beginning their journey as teachers, to create, a sense of belonging to a community whose practices are already defined and recognised. The desire thus produces the constraints of normalisation. Our desires ensure complicity in our regulation.

In writing the play, I will attempt to mobilise the productive nature of desire. I will use the students' writing and my recreation of the space and place of writing to animate desire as a generative force. I will also gesture towards the possibilities of for whom or what the desire in this space works for.

The characters and events in the play are fictional although they are based on actual students and the writing they produced for assessment of the Teaching Studies unit. In writing the play, I do not presume to represent their lives or even to suggest that what is written here is remotely near to what was experienced by the students that offered their work as data for my project. The students and the writing they produced bring into being the writing space. For readers wishing to read synopses of the actual work submitted by these students, these are included in Appendix H. However, it should be noted that their writing is not meant to function as data, and what follows in the present chapter is not data analysis (although it might be considered "data" analysis or 'data-becoming'). Synopses and brief character profiles for Patch Adams and Big Fat Gypsy Weddings (both referred to below) can also be found in Appendix H.

Also please note in advance that this chapter ends abruptly directly after the play ends. This is intentional. It is a resistive technique against the (representational) temptation to arrest the indeterminacy and flow of the play and the process of becoming with/in it by commenting, analysing, explicating and generally, closing down an event that is intentionally open and connectable.

## **The Play**

Voice 1: It is early spring. Outside things are happening. The crocus have already bloomed and there is the whisper of warmth in the air. There is a fresh and new quality to the outside that those inside feel a sense of longing for. But this is a university city and so beneath the sweet and temperate notes that sing the onset of fair weather and free time, a network of loners sit quietly indoors;

in bedrooms and libraries, computer suites and studies, churning out words for the appraisal of others. This is a solitary activity and one that doesn't lend itself well to seasonal appreciation.

Emilia: Like a duck in water, the quietness of her writing is misleading. The infrequency of the tapping on the desktop keys gives some indication of the ebb and flow of inspiration. She is in that place where the idea, the nub of the thing she is trying to achieve continues to escape her. She can almost feel it. An odd sensation, but if she concentrates enough she experiences her 'argument' like a weight on and in her body; odd, but reassuring, because at least she knows that it is there. In moments of lesser clarity she imagines the thing as a cloud, a gas like substance growing and shrinking, merging with other gases, too wispy and intangible to grasp. Frustratingly it escapes her. She is tired now of the contradictions that only become apparent when she puts fingers to keyboard – complexity and consistency; uncertainty and comprehensibility; originality and standardised criteria. She needs a break.

Wrapped up in a blue woollen blanket, she stares out of the kitchen window. For a second she notes the ridiculous contrast of the pale yellow delicacy of the daffodils against the overgrown hazard that is their communal garden. She notices too the blackish, grey gunk that clings to the base of the kitchen tap – it repulses her, but she resists the urge to wipe it away. This is a tea break only, two minutes, five at most, and then she will return to her desk and write more. She smiles as she recalls herself yesterday looking up the word procrastination using her go-to on-line thesaurus. Today was not going to be one of those days. She would write. Why does nobody clean around the base of the taps? It takes a minute, maximum.

Ethereal presence (Patch Adams MD): Communal living is one of life's joys.

Emilia: What nonsense. The kettle boils and as she pours she recalls the scene that depicts life in the commune. She doesn't think she is that type. All that carping on about love and friendship and service, it was a bit much to stomach. Still there was something joyful about the film, despite Robin Williams who she

found inexplicably irritating. She wonders how many of the fellow students in her class will choose the Dead Poets Society for the assignment she's working on now. Maybe she should have chosen it. There seemed to be a definite tendency towards that sort of thing... another thing to think about.

Voice 2: In another part of town Louisa is taking a well-deserved break. In exactly eight minutes she needs to start getting ready for work. She approaches 'relaxing' in these eight minutes with the paradoxical fervour that only those with too many things to do in too little time might understand. She stares blankly at the television.

Louisa: Tomorrow she will re-read the whole thing and make any final alterations but for now she will bask in its completeness. If she didn't have work, she would go out and celebrate. As it is, the sense of accomplishment is enough to sustain merriment for, she hopes, the rest of the evening. She blinks and realises she is watching adverts. She sits up-right and scans the room for the remote, seeing her phone instead she chooses to update her status; "700 words written today and first draft complete. Happy!"

Emilia: She sits down again. A quick glance at her Newsfeed alerts her to a friend who is clearly making better progress than she. Shit, she needs to focus or this thing will never get written. She scans the bullet points of her next section and suddenly she's captured it again. The pieces briefly fall together and she hastens to write them in before they disappear again. This bit is sounding OK.

She writes.

...

She likes the idea suggested by her group that perhaps Sam didn't mind his label of naughty. She had until that point thought of him only in terms of a victim – wrongly accused and blamed for playground misdemeanours because he was an easy target. This felt like something of a revelation at the time. She glances down the page at the half-written, jumbled mess of notes and

quotations she made before calling time on her endeavours yesterday. There is something exciting there, the precise details of which she's not yet sure about – she hasn't written them yet, but the thought is nearly there, in a bullet point, highlighted red.

...

She is going to turn the group's idea on its head. What if Sam doesn't give a shit about his label, what if his naughtiness is a response to the school's desire to cast someone in that role?

...

Voice 1: The lull in attentiveness towards the current paragraph allows just enough give in the thought process for a rupture to appear. Oddly, the presence can be traced back to the gunk around the taps but Patch has something else to offer that has yet to be thought.

Ethereal presence (Patch Adams MD): If Patch was going to interrupt with anything at this juncture it would probably be to remind you to have joy in the task at hand.

Voice 1: Ironical, as whilst writing is certainly a process full of affective sensation, the writer would be hard-pressed to name any such emotive moment as joyful.

Ethereal presence (Patch Adams MD): Regardless, joy and goofiness are a credo...

Voice 1: ...of sorts.

Emilia: Joy and goofiness; the prospect of either seemed an eternity away. There was something else she took away from the film that was slightly less sickly sweet and she thought of it now. It wasn't the words of wisdom from Patch himself that she recalled and perhaps this was why she had been drawn to it. Or perhaps it was the striking visual offered by the trick of the eye and clever camera work. What was it again?

Voice 1: Emilia recalls a scene from a film in which two patients at a mental healthcare facility sit and talk. One of the patients displays erratic and repetitive behaviour, constantly asking his fellow inmates “how many fingers?” and scolding them despite their responses of the apparently correct answer of 4, as he holds four fingers aloft. In a moment of kindness the bad tempered and elderly patient offers Patch Adams a clue; “look beyond the problem”. Taking his advice literally, Patch looks beyond the fingers held up in front of him. The fore image blurs and the four fingers appear as five. The old man repeats the question; “how many fingers?” “Five.” Replies Patch, and the old man is elated.

Emilia: Looking past the problem is a philosophy surely worthy of a teacher who cares for her children. If nothing else, she knows how often and with how much force this principle has been explicated within the cosy confines of the university walls. With no children present to test resolve or good intention, she has certainly been caught up in the rhetoric. Perhaps this is worth mentioning. Think on Emilia, could this be my Dead Poets.

Voice 2: Ready for work, applying mascara, Louisa thinks of the women and girls in Big Fat Gypsy Weddings. The presence of these women at this moment is explained by the fact that she has today written them into her assignment and, for their weddings at least, they wear a lot of eye makeup.

Louisa: She thinks back to her sessions and briefly feels a sense of loss. She was constantly surprised by how much everybody seemed to care and how the uncertainty and intensity of the experience brought them together. She knows she will miss this. She is proud though of the end product but god, she hopes it was worth it. She will never be that student who doesn’t care how other people judge her; her work. She knows she gains confidence from the approval of others – she doesn’t feel bad about this, indeed she has long suspected that teaching has encouraged this facet of her behaviour. She knows she made that argument well in her writing and you know what, she has convinced herself of it. She knows that is not enough, but for now, she’ll take it.

Voice 1: Emilia's hands hover over her keyboard. She can't afford another detour or to lose any more time. Deadlines are looming and she needs to be decisive about 'what gets in'; she doesn't need another idea, she is clearly behind others – statements of jubilation on Facebook are a long way off for her. But she knows of her tutor's propensity for this kind of stuff. The idea is hers and she likes it, but she questions whether it is the right thing for her or her reader. The threads of thought are weaving themselves together but she is frustrated at her lack of finger to keyboard action. Writing is about word count; this is not the time for ideas. She weighs up her options, glancing both at the onscreen time display and word count, stubbornly consistent reminders of her lack of progress. In that moment she feels a weight settle in her stomach. She stands up and goes to the window; she can't see the daffodils from here, just the tangle of shrubs, waste bins and casually strewn litter. What a mess. Communal living – what a joke.

Louisa: The front door closes behind her and as she unlocks the car (manually; it is very old). She notices a slight warmth in the air. Working evenings is made slightly more agreeable in this weather, either extreme is an irritant; too warm and sunny and the bar fills to bursting with happy-go-lucky patrons; too cold and she faces the prospect of being stranded in town when the car refuses to start for her journey home. It starts now. This day has been productive.



# Chapter 11: Dissidence

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I am sure that this is a common experience, but in order to write this, the final chapter of my thesis, I first had to re-read the preceding ten chapters, simply to remind myself of what is in them. This feels like a guilty omission, one of the elements of 'production' that should be kept quiet in order that the 'written-ness' (MacLure, 2003) of the final text might be obscured. But in keeping with the overall sentiment of the thesis (and having just re-read it, I feel able to surmise this with some confidence), to acknowledge what is required to 'make a text' does not negate its value. Indeed, I believe attempting to reduce down the complex, rhizomatic, poststructural, nomadic foray into student writing that has been this thesis, into a neat summary a particularly difficult task. Nonetheless, in keeping with the tradition of 'the technology of the essay' (St. Pierre, 2000) I will attempt in what follows to summarise the main points of the thesis, its strengths and weaknesses and outline possible implications and further research opportunities.

Before I do so, I am reminded of a passage I read some years ago in John Schostak's (2002) useful guide to understanding, designing and conducting qualitative research. Schostak reveals to the would-be or early stage doctoral candidate the fear and loathing induced by the oft asked question; 'so what is it (the thesis) about?' Often a sign of genuine interest, sometimes merely familial pleasantries, the question is so hideously unanswerable the longer my doctoral studies have continued the more visceral my reaction to being asked has become. I now worry that the kindly enquirers might just catch a glimpse of my shoulders tensing, or my facial muscles contorting as I desperately attempt to surmise five years of work and 75,000 words into a neat sentence or two. If this is so, I offer my apologies now to those who have asked, for whatever the reason, and have been perplexed by my less than enthusiastic response. Grimaces aside, to the task of summarising my thesis, we now turn. After all, here I get far more than a sentence or two.

Whilst at various points across the previous ten chapters the thesis has strayed and meandered to and away from the research questions I originally posed, I think perhaps they are a useful point of return here. To remind ourselves then, these questions were:

How might writing be used as a tool for learning?

How might I, as a teacher educator, make the process of writing one of value for the students that I teach?

In hindsight and with the advantage of a nigh on complete thesis behind me, I believe that much of the meandering I have indulged in, whilst perhaps viewed by some as a 'weakness' of research proper, is in fact a necessary departure; a relation of need brought about by the limits that research questions tend to impose. In other words, meanders and strays are inevitable once questions are posed because questions like (or as) texts are limited and constrained by their own construction. They cannot capture the complexity of social phenomena, learning, writing, life – they are intrinsic reductions of all of these things and so meandering away from their limits; transgressing their boundaries seems impossible to avoid. Formed as they are through the interplay of language and our experience of the world, questions are also riddled with pre-understandings, familiar categories, assumptions and striations which only become apparent in searching out their answers. So for example, in the early stages of the research I was keen to identify how writing and learning were or might be related; how one might affect the other. What I found instead however, is that writing and learning are not containable entities. They are not products. They cannot be understood as, or contemplated, as singularities. Rather they are multiplicitious, constituted of various elements that 'exist in reciprocal presuppositions and cannot be separated' (Roy, 2003:71). Students' writing and the learning that it involves is nebulas. Part of its constellation is words on paper, but the tubers grow outwards in ways that cannot be measured by number. Some of these tubers have been documented in this thesis. Pedagogy clearly had/has a significant role; similarly social relations and inter-textuality and many other forms of exteriority. Interestingly, it is within or

as a result of these constellations that I believe the 'value' I enquire after in the second of my research questions is produced.

Ironically, this value came not by way of 'tools' (the language of my original research question) but of 'weapons'. Without wishing to undermine the role that implicated reading played in the praxiological realisations of the project, it seems that the activities I designed and the methods I employed are negligible when compared to the philosophical turn the interventions that the action research element of my thesis were intended to realise. In other words, the structures and strategies I employed (fluid and continually evolving as they were) in the creation and delivery of the implicated reading interventions might well have, or indeed might well in the future, be replaced by an alternative activity or method because, and returning to the Deleuzo-Guattarian conceptualisation of desire, the significance lies not in what we (I) lacked and what then filled that gap, but what our (my) desiring forces produced. In this case, the production involved the emergence of weaponry of the sort that has the potential to disturb and disrupt; to eke out difference against the exhausting tidal wave of repetition immersing the world of teaching and learning. This is the outcome of the research that I think is worth holding onto and in whatever form it may take, I believe it constitutes one of the strengths of the research project overall.

The production of weaponry was summarised towards the end of Chapter 7, but is worth recalling here. Likened to jewellery, weapons are of the nomad. They are the necessary apparatus for dismantling state mentality. Importantly, for my project and conjecturing a response to the research questions posed above, the weapon is characterised by Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2004) by its mobility. Like jewellery it is always transportable, but (possibly less like jewellery here) it is also described as a 'projectile'. It can be used to disarm and dislodge, to aim and throw into state controlled space to dislodge and disrupt it. It is here that I believe the value resides, and the relationship between writing and learning (not as compact categories but as constellations) can be realised. If the pedagogical tinkering; the soft changes I presided over during the two

cycles of action research I undertook, produced (even for just some of the participants) an adjustment in mind-set, a small rupture in the ways that they think, see, act and respond, then the learning and writing relationship I sought to strengthen through reimagining its nature seems to me to be validated in terms of value. In short, the conclusions I drew from the research suggested that this weaponry or mind-set had the potential to encourage students to take risks, disrupt and dislodge preconceptions about meaning and text, as well as, I think, realise something of the connectability of the learning/writing process. These productions also did much to provide a response to another question I posed towards the end of Chapter 2, which was both an extension and refinement of my original concern:

What attempts can be made to disrupt an understanding of progress that popularises a vision of learning and development that valorises relentless betterment?

In this case, I think that the implicated reading activities were particularly significant in that, although I am not wedded to them as a 'strategy for teaching success', I do believe that there was something particular about their formation which lent itself very well to this disruption of progress as relentless betterment. The imagery of the rhizome as compared to the root-tree is a useful point of reference here. In providing the students with a variety of texts to read against their own journal writing or stories about practice, their lines of thought seemed more likely to be refracted outwardly in a multitude of directions. This was because the implicated reading activities forced the students into looking at the connections between entities, events, ideas and identities and in doing so, lines of thought splintered outwards and sideways, rather than remaining unified and forward travelling. This seemed to necessarily disrupt the linearity of the progress narrative because the students were required to overt their gaze away from 'better' and on to 'other'. This is Deleuzo-Guattarian logic at work. A logic that rejects binaries in favour of connections – 'this *and* this *and* this *and*' rather than 'either/or, this *or* that' (St. Pierre, 2013).

As a result, the pursuit of 'better' became less significant. However, as argued throughout the thesis, the loss of 'betterment' does not negate progress, just that progress is reconceived. Neither does it imply stagnation. Roy (2003) for example, suggests that in rethinking educational common places we produce 'transformative energy' imbued with potential and kinetic force. In doing so, I believe the pantomime of change, betterment and victories critiqued in the early chapters of the thesis may be avoided with no loss of agency; indeed maybe there are gains.

One of the more surprising realisations of the research was how uncomfortable or unsettling the process of disrupting linear trajectories and turning over striated ground can be. The responses from both the students and I were often emotive but the range of affects experienced by the participants was wider than I initially expected; from confusion and anxiety to relief and enjoyment. In continuing to work on developing Deleuzo-Guattarian praxis for student teacher writing and indeed, teacher education more generally, I will, I think, be much more mindful and attentive to the potential of these kinds of activities to unnerve, confuse and jar. This is because I think that in the first instance, these visceral responses can often be interpreted as a negative – something to be anaesthetised against. Eagerness, excitement, joy and wonder are all well and good, but experiencing worry, fear, confusion or anxiety are regarded, for obvious reasons, as emotive responses, worth avoiding. However, I disagree. The experience of learning, teaching and writing in this way can be regarded as an aesthetic experience. Robinson (2010) describes this as an event or moment where one's senses are operating at their peak. I am reminded of Deleuze's notion of affect as a reeling sensation. Part of the power of rhizomatic practice is its ability to throw the self into upheaval and make it reel (Deleuze and Guattari, cited in Roy, 2003). Rather than to be avoided, we should seek to actively induce affect, even if, at the time of its creation, the sensation might not be necessarily pleasing. Whilst it is physically and temporally produced, affect transcends its geographical and temporal origins – it is not tied to place, or space or, indeed, persons. It is an independent entity (Colman, 2005a) with

the power to alter bodies and things. To create such a thing does not speak of the desire for 'shock value' (although sometimes the metaphor with its visceral connotations helps me to conceptualise Deleuzian affect) rather, I think of imbued significance. This encounter/activity/relation called writing, or praxis, or (implicated) reading, cuts through banality. It has the potential to produce something in us that, whilst not belonging to our person, shakes up and turns over what was already there. If the experience of writing should do anything, should it not, at the least, do that?

Whilst, I am keen not to play down the significance of the implicated reading activities, I do think as far as the implications of my research go, these activities may, or may not feature in my future practice. I think they are as likely to be supplanted with another set of activities as they are to be repeated. However, I do not believe this is evidence of their failure, or even to the partiality of their success, indeed I believe not becoming wedded to them, is an approach I willingly advocate. This is both because, and as I have already pointed out, it was what they produced that was of significance but also that what I take as the successes from the research project is more about 'becoming' than material practices. I feel I can say quite confidently that whilst I devoted both time and energy to the implicated read, the thesis was never supposed to be 'about them' and, I hope, that despite their prominence, this has come through in the reading of the thesis overall. They were only ever really intentioned to be an experiment. Indeed, much of this thesis has been just that and if there is something I will take away from its production, will share with colleagues and students, it will be the advocacy of experimentation as a pedagogy of choice. Experimentation is not about testing out a theory or attempting to meet a specified end with an altered means, it is a choice we make to, as Baugh explains:

...not only 'see what happens', but to determine what different entities (bodies, languages, social groupings, environments and so on) are capable of.

(2005:91)

In lots of ways I feel that this has been the overall purpose of the thesis – to see what writing, research, writers and researchers are capable of. It is these capabilities (the weapons and affects summarised above) that I would argue constitute the ‘contribution to knowledge’ that I fretted over in Chapter 1 (and continue to fret over as I write). The weapons and affects are, I believe, befitting of the root cause of the nervousness and caution with which I have always approached this rather grandiose doctoral statement. They might give my thesis purpose, but they do not, and were not intended to be the kinds of knowing that is contained and static, a one size fits all book of knowing to be taken off the shelf.

My counter point to grandeur is, I would argue, a practice worth partaking in, in its own right. Over the course of the research, the way I think about student writing has continued to shift, grow and reshape, both because of the practical experiments I undertook (and will continue to undertake) but also because of my growing commitment to Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophies. A significant realisation in the research was the pliability of the rhizome and innumerable opportunities for its potential to be exploited in the everyday teaching/learning/life encounter, so that rhizomatic practice becomes an approach to teaching/learning/living in its widest sense (notwithstanding its connectability with student writing). In realising this potential I have become more and more committed to smaller subversions of the kind of orthodoxy and representationalism detailed in Chapter 5. This does not necessarily call for grand gestures. In the context of my work as a teacher educator, it does not necessitate the rewriting of units, or programme structures, or changes to assessment practices. It can be more subtle than that and it is within these subtleties (ironically) where the impact of my research in this thesis is probably most keenly felt. How one interprets the task set, explains it to others; choices made about how session time is spent; advocacy of a particular philosophical principle in conversation with a colleague or student – these quiet and relatively minor flections in the ways that I ‘practice’ can provide many a line of disorientation.

This is important. It is certainly a less fraught way to proceed. An alternative approach of advocating one set of practices against another and presenting them as the 'answers' to problems identified earlier in the thesis is a risky business. Simply replacing one regime of thought or truth with another is an outcome poststructuralist thinkers will always caution against (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000).

Relatedly, Deleuze and Guattari alert us to the dynamic relationship between smooth and striated spaces and the ease at which one reverts/reverses to the other; 'smooth space is constantly being translated into a striated space [and] striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to smooth space' (1987/2004:474). This trait was borne out as the thesis unfolded, as I found that the challenge of holding on to smooth spaces for any period of time was always all the more difficult for the pervasive and relentless force of humanism. Time and time again, I realised that I was not nearly as free from its clutches as I would have liked or previously thought. St. Pierre is clear that this is the way of things, how can it be otherwise. She writes:

Humanism is the air we breathe, the language we speak, the shape of the homes we live in, the relations we are able to have with others, the politics we practice, the map that locates us on the earth, the futures we can imagine, the limits of our pleasures.

(2000a:478)

Whilst I accept this and believe it both part of the challenge of attempting to think something other, as well as necessitating the effort to do so, I also found it endlessly frustrating. That I could so often return to the same – representationalism, repetition, binary logic, closing and endings and so on, was often dispiriting. This was especially the case when, within my own attempts at practitioner action research, as detailed in Part 2 of this thesis, I was putting in so much effort with experimenting with difference. In action research; in being critical of one set of practices I understood/understand as propounding the worst of representationalism and then offering an alternative which I then claim as 'having value', how can I simultaneously claim to subvert the tradition of



'beginnings' and 'endings' or victory narratives? What is this thesis if not inclusive of, or even in its totality, both of these things? I admit to being deeply troubled by these questions. Indeed they have haunted the whole process of writing. I admit to deleting passages and sentences that inferred a preference for either/or logic on several (if not more) occasions. Should I be relieved that I (hopefully) 'made good in the end' by being savvy enough to delete and edit; that I am able to avoid representing myself as definitive or victorious on paper? Perhaps my saving grace is that I continue to be troubled. That I do not and did not intend implicated reading to be the answer to my research questions; to be the set of practices with which I successfully replace old, broken, nullified systems. On reflection, perhaps a near constant state of 'being troubled', whilst somewhat exhausting and, as already described, incredibly frustrating, has allowed me to temper the 'outcomes' of this project in ways that I can live with. I have, I hope, for the most part, avoided making grand claims or proclamations that student writing can be saved if only I and others employ similar tactics to those I designed in the future. Instead I have looked to smaller subversions as examples of the project's strengths and as holding the potential for impact.

My responses to students in the teaching and learning encounter, fore fronting rather than suppressing or neglecting the affective response, continuing to experiment with what and how data can produce; these are all adjustments and risks I will continue to take and work into my own writing and learning practices, as well as those of my students. I see these not necessarily as outcomes to the research project as a whole but as additions to the texture of the fabric of teaching, learning and writing. I have, for example, learnt a huge amount about the potential for pushing the boundaries of what constitutes data and analysis. When I began this doctoral journey the thought that I would have written a chapter as a play might well have seemed absurd, but there it is, in Chapter 10 – a play. Whether or not I repeat this adventure is not the point. The act has altered my conception of learning and writing and thus, my teaching. It is the rupture to the pattern of thought that counts – for both the

students and for myself. Grand gestures and bold statements of success are not the only ways to make (a) difference.

Roy, names this whole approach 'dissidence' and it is here, with this thought of dissidence that I would like to end.

(Although, this is not an ending proper you understand, that would not do at all.)

**Dissidence:**

To proceed in...[the] manner of deterritorializing, we make small ruptures in our everyday habits of thought, and start minor dissident flows and not grand 'signifying breaks', for grand gestures start their own totalizing movement, and are easily captured. Instead, small ruptures are often imperceptible, and allow flows that are not easily detected or captured by majoritarian discourses. This emphasis on the minor and almost indiscernible is very important.

(2003:31)

I could not agree more.

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## **Block Placement**

See School-based Training (SBT)

## **Classified Grades**

Students' assessed work is awarded a mark out of 100. The marks are grouped by classification. At undergraduate level the mark bands are as follows:

70+	first class pass
60 – 69	upper second class pass
50 – 59	lower second class pass
40 – 49	third class pass
Below 39	fail

## **Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI)**

In 1992, John Major's government introduced a national and standardised regime for the inspection of schools. This national inspecting body would come to be known as Ofsted. Before this time, the responsibility for inspecting schools was devolved locally. Inspectors were often based in Local Education Authorities. The role of HMI was to collate and report the information derived from local inspections to the Secretary of State for Education.

## **Key Stage Two Teacher**

Children in England begin compulsory education at the age of 4. Initially, they are taught within the foundation stage or Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This phase encompasses both the compulsory Reception year, as well as non-compulsory nursery education. At the time of writing, primary education in

England was organised into a total of three phases (this later changed to four phases). The second phase of primary education was key stage one. This catered for children from 5 to 7 years of age and included Year 1 and Year 2. The final phase of primary education was key stage two. This age phase catered for children from 7 – 11 years old and included Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6. A **Key Stage Two Teacher** would have been expected to teach classes across the year groups of the key stage.

### **Levels/Level 4**

The standardised measure of a child's attainment in England is organised by 'level'. In the Primary phase children are expected to perform, notwithstanding any special educational need, between the levels of 1 and 5. The expected level of attainment in literacy and numeracy for a child leaving primary school is a level 4.

In order to determine progress within each level, a further graduation of the scale is applied. Each level is broken down into three 'sub-levels', c, b and a – 'a' indicates the top of the scale, so for a child achieving a level 3a, positive progression would be mapped out as follows: 3a to a 4c, to a 4b, to a 4a and so on.

### **Local Authority /Local Education Authorities (LEA)**

Schools in England are grouped by location and to varying degrees (depending on the type of school) controlled by the local council or 'authority'.

### **National Literacy Strategy**

National guidelines published in 1998 by the government department responsible for compulsory education in England. The document advised schools and teachers in detail about how literacy might best be taught. The strategy organised literacy learning into sequences of key 'learning objectives' progressing in levels of difficulty. The learning objectives were organised by category (text level, sentence level and word level) and then allocated, depending on their level of difficulty to a year group. Each year group was then subdivided by 'term' (autumn through until

summer, or terms 1, 2 and 3). A teacher, for example, working in Year 3 in the spring term, could therefore see exactly which learning objectives her or his class of children should be working towards. The guidance also offered a lesson structure complete with timings for each component. Suggested activities for each component with corresponding resources were also provided.

### **Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT)**

On successfully achieving Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) teachers are required to complete a probationary period (the equivalent to one school year or three terms at full-time) as an induction into the profession. The induction period is assessed and must be satisfactorily completed for teachers to become fully qualified and free to progress up the pay scale. During the induction period, the novice teacher is referred to as a Newly Qualified Teacher or NQT.

### **Ofsted**

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools in England (HMI). They inspect and regulate services which care for children and young people. School inspections conclude with the production of an inspection report. This is an open public document. The report includes an overall 'grade' for the school. In 2014, these grades were as follows:

- grade 1 (outstanding)
- grade 2 (good)
- grade 3 (requires improvement)
- grade 4 (inadequate).

### **Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs)**

Compulsory and standardised assessments administered to children in England by teachers on behalf of the government department for education. Since the tests were introduced in 1991, they have been administered to 7, 11 and 14 year olds,



in English, maths and science, although several changes in policy have seen various combinations of the testing regime. Tests for 14 year olds were abandoned, in all subjects, in 2008. The statutory testing of science for 11 year olds was abolished 2010.

### **School-based training (SBT)**

A set of initial teacher education (ITE) criteria are imposed by the Secretary of State under the Education (School Teachers' Qualifications) (England) Regulations 2003. The criteria include the requirement for ITE institutions to provide the opportunity for their students to complete a specified minimum number of days 'training' in schools. The ITE programmes referred to in this thesis currently organise these days into sustained blocks of school-based experience. The 'blocks' range from 2 – 3 weeks, to 10 weeks on more intense programmes. They are often referred to by students and work colleagues as 'block placements'.

### **Senior Leadership Team**

The collective management of a primary school. The team usually comprises of the head teacher, deputy or assistant head teachers and key stage leaders. However, it may also include teachers with other roles and management responsibilities which have been designated as integral to the successful management of the school. Usually, these roles are differentiated from others by the award of **Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR)** payments. To receive a TLR payment, the responsibility the teacher undertakes must exceed that of the 'normal' classroom teacher.

### **Shared Reading**

One of the suggested activities of the National Literacy Strategy.

### **Special Measures**

A status assigned to schools by Ofsted where it has been decided that;

...the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

(The 2005 Education Act, 2005:29)

The status triggered an intensification of *monitoring inspection arrangements*. In September 2012, the term 'special measures' was replaced by 'notice to improve'.

### **Teachers' Standards**

Documentation provided by the responsible governing body for education which specifies the minimum knowledge, skills and attributes required by teachers and student teachers.

### **Year 6**

See Key Stage Two Teacher

### **References**

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## **Appendix A – Interview Transcripts**

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236	Student J interview 1: April 4 <sup>th</sup> 2011	J/1:2011
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241	Student P interview 1: April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2011	P/1:2011
243	Student K interview 1: April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2011	K/1:2011
245	Student K interview 2: 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	K/2:2011
246	Student M interview 1: March 29 <sup>th</sup> 2011	M/1:2011
248	Student C interview 1: April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2011	C/1:2011
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250	Student B interview 1: April 4 <sup>th</sup> 2011	B/1:2011

**J/1:2011**

**Student J interview 1: April 4<sup>th</sup> 2011**

Me: The Teaching Studies unit has been structured around writing. You have been asked to write journal entries, a shared paper and then finally an individual paper. How do you feel towards writing in general?

Student J: If I'm truthful I don't mind writing like... [inaudible] used to write stories, I don't mind like writing free... is it free writing?

Me: Yeah

Student J: But, I, er... I hate writing assignments...

10 Me: Ok, that's alright. So you enjoy writing, but a particular kind of writing.

Student J: Yeah.

Me: So you don't like academic writing necessarily.

Student J: Yeah.

Me: Why? What is it about it that you don't like?

Student J: I don't know, I think it's cos I can never really put across what I'm trying to say properly so it always sounds wrong and I'm always under pressure as well so I'm writing poems or something like that... I'm writing about things I want to write about as well but academic writing is usually not what I want to write about.

20 Me: OK, do you think that the fact that you struggle to... because if you write stories and poetry and stuff... you have ideas; you must be able to communicate those. So what's the difference between that and academic writing?

Student J: Because if those ideas make no sense in the stories then no one else needs to read them [trails off – inaudible] and no one ever reads my poems anyway, I just write them, so they probably don't make sense in [inaudible] but no one knows.

Me: So, it's writing for an audience?

Student J: Yes.

Me: So, in that case... and that is perfectly understandable, what you've just said, erm... so if that's academic, what about the journal writing then, do you find that easier because that doesn't necessarily have an audience?

30 Student J: Well, it would be fine if it er... again, if it wasn't being marked or anything. I mean if I was just like writing a diary it would be... I mean, well I don't, but I wouldn't have a problem with writing a diary but like I've got like those journal entries feed into our assignments and it's like, I feel the pressure.

Me: Ok, that's fine, so does writing help you to make progress?

Student J: Hmm.. I suppose so. I don't know... I suppose so. Cos like I said before, if I'm writing things down it helps me personally yeah, so yeah, I suppose it does, yeah.

Me: Ok, well what kind of progress?

Student J: It helps me to remember if I write things down. I'll have a check list and kind of check things off. Are you talking about writing in general or like writing assignments?

40 Me: Let's talk about writing assignments for now.

Student J: OK, so other forms of writing would help me to remember yeah, but assignments probably not. It might do, say if something happened in placement it might trigger something, I might think 'oh yeah, I did an assignment', but I don't think it would be something that I'd think about again. I don't think I'd actively remember the assignment that I've done in this Teaching Studies unit.

Me: It's a shame isn't it... because you spend so much of your time on it [laughs].

Student J: [laughs] I know.

Me: Ok, slightly moving on to talk about something a bit different erm... As part of the unit I have used several popular culture texts, The Rainbow Fish, Grease, Amélie, as  
50 as starting points for our ALS discussions. Did any of these texts help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently?

Student J: The Rainbow Fish did definitely, not so much Grease and Amélie.

Me: Why The Rainbow Fish then?

Student J: The Rainbow Fish because I'd never thought about it, I'd never really thought about it in that way, the different versions, and if I go into school and read that book I'll always think you know, there's a different slant on this book and you know, I never would have thought that and even, I think, you know, I think that's one thing that I will take into school. I don't think I'll be able to read that book without thinking you know... I don't even think I'll read the book to be honest because I'll be thinking, you know, this has two  
60 different versions [laughs] so that definitely informed my practice. Grease and Amélie... I suppose not really because I don't know... er... no, not really.

Me: Ok, so why do you think Grease and Amélie weren't?

Student J: [Pause] I suppose because I don't really think I understood Amélie, I just don't think I clicked with... I made any connections with it...

Me: It didn't resonate with you?

Student J: Yeah and Grease, I suppose the same really, I mean I've never watched Amélie and I watched Grease when I was like three and I never really, I never really felt the need to watch it again cos it never really interested me, so I think that because it didn't really relate to me personally then I just didn't really... [Trails off.]

70 Me: Right OK, what connections, if any, did you make between the texts I presented and your own?

Student J: The Rainbow Fish did definitely.

Me: Why?

Student J: [Long pause] Because I suppose I'll never really read things in the classroom at face value any more...

Me: But did it... all the time you're learning to be a teacher, did it make you think about that process of learning to be a teacher any differently... is that too difficult? Like an abstract question [laughs].

Student J: Yeah.

80 Me: [laughing] Well, I'll rephrase it... So, for you the important thing with the popular culture texts was how you could relate to them; if it resonated with you...

Student J: Yeah.

Me: So it wasn't to do with the fact that we were watching a bit of film or reading a bit of story that made you think about stuff, it was that ... I don't think you're saying it was about how familiar you were with it, were you necessarily that familiar with The Rainbow Fish?

Student J: Not really, I mean I remember reading it in primary school but it's just another book like The Gruffalo or [inaudible]... [trails off].

90 Me: Because it's ... I suppose it feels like it's got more to do with you, with you being in school.

Jeanne: Yeah, yeah...

Me: Whereas Grease I suppose... it is about school, but it doesn't really connect with our experience of being primary school teachers.

Student J: Yeah...

Me: I'm putting words into your mouth...

Student J: No, no...

Me: I said that I wouldn't talk.

Student J: No, I totally agree with the things that you've said, it's just that I wouldn't have been able to verbalise that, which is why I said before... it all comes out... yeah...

100 ME: Ok, is there anything else you want to add.

Student J: No.

**S/1:2011**

**Student S Interview 1: March 29<sup>th</sup> 2011**

Me: The Teaching Studies unit has been structured around writing. You have been asked to write journal entries, a shared paper and then finally an individual paper. How do you feel towards writing in general?

110 Student S: Erm, I prefer writing things down. I think it helps me form my ideas better but the thing where I struggle with is like... I've not got a very high vocabulary of you know... what I mean like my words aren't as articulate as everybody else's is and that's why I can't... I'm not great with using big words, if you know what I mean. I think that's just a thing that I feel I'm not so confident in but writing in general I think helps me... I form my ideas, like I learn better from writing than if I'm just reading something. If I read something and then I write it up, or yeah... when I'm trying to put things, or organise things I always put it into writing you know, so... I don't know ... yeah... positive, but my writing style might not be... I'm not confident in the words that I use.

Me: But I read that first bit of that assignment and that was the last thing from my mind thinking oh, she not using any fancy words. It seemed ... or did you spend a lot of time making it that way?

120 Student S: No, not really. I mean, when I like read everyone else's papers I thought 'wow, look at all the big words they're using.' I just thought I can't... I don't do that, so that's what puts me down a little bit. Even though, I do use...er... I can't explain what I mean.

Me: You can, go on.

Student S: Er ... just words sometimes that people say I think 'oh god, what does that mean?' Aw, I don't know. I can't... I feel confident when I'm writing and if I understand it's acceptable to me then I... but I don't think... I think when people read it they're gonna think, 'god that's rubbish'. I think that that's just a confidence thing though.

130 Me: Ok slight shift in focus: As part of the unit I have used several popular culture texts as starting points for our ALS discussions. Did any of these texts help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently? So for example, did you read Grease? You know, we did the Grease thing and then you might have looked at your writing and thought 'oh, hold on, I thought it was about this but now I think it's about this.' Or did something happen in school and you thought 'oh The Rainbow Fish allowed me to think about it like this instead of like this.'

140 Student S: Yeah, definitely that Rainbow Fish, I would have never of thought of it that way... when you said it's not even about what you think that it is cos you don't look deeper. I think when you read a story unless you've been asked afterwards to think about what it means you just take it at face value, like The Rainbow Fish I never thought about the things we discussed afterwards, but yeah, it definitely did change my mind. It makes you think... start thinking more. Like when I read a book now I'll always think... cos like



with children when you're reading a book and you ask them what happened in it, I think with that... yeah... I've starting thinking 'well is it that?' and taking on board what other people say and it always makes me change my mind, like I always think 'why did I think that?'

Me: [laughs]

Student S: [laughs] I don't know like... what other people say and what other people write always influences what I think. Sometimes it doesn't, sometimes I think I don't agree, but more often it does because I think I'm a bit, not simple... but basic.

Me: Aww.

150 Student S: [laughs] Do you know what I mean? When other people say things I always think like 'oh yeah, why didn't I think of that.' But yeah, I think definitely writing differently, or thinking about things differently more.

Me: But you realise that that shows how deeply you can think about things because if you were a simple person...

Student S: [laughs]

Me: when someone else said to you, 'well'... or wrote something and said it's about that, you'd think, 'what a load of rubbish, I know what this is about.' It's... a narrow person will only ever see one way.

Student S: One way of it yeah. I think yeah, writing differently definitely.

160 Me: And just a last question... what connections, if any, did you make between the texts I presented and your own? Did anything relate to your experience of being a teacher, did anything resonate with you particularly?

Student S: Just the Harry Potter one sticks in my mind, thinking about what you used to be as a teacher and how much you... from placement, how much you've progressed in that way. Like what you were, or what you thought even before going into this, what you thought you wanted to be and now what I... how I know I want to teach and what teacher I want to be.

Me: OK

Student S: If that makes sense yeah?

170 Me: Yeah, that's fine. Anything else you want to add?

Student S: No.

Me: Right, brill.

## Student P/1:2011

### Student P interview 1: April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

Me: Ok? Does writing help you to make progress?

180 Student P: Erm yes, but it's progress... it doesn't help my ... the practicality of teaching. I don't think writing about my teaching... or does it... it's just when you're faced with thirty children and you know in that [different] environment where you are doing your university writing, I think that that gets forgotten about a little bit and you just have to get down to the practicalities of things, so I think that, I think the writing and reflective process takes a back seat, I know it does for me. So little Tommy is misbehaving and you don't think 'er, let me remember what I wrote about behaviour management strategies.'

Me: So do you think that the practicalities and writing in the university are so distinct that...

190 Student P: They are two separate entities in my opinion; this whole thing is what I am writing about. The way we are trained in university is such a stark difference from the way we're taught in schools because in schools is all about results, it's all about, you've got a class teacher and you've got to show that you respect their approach and adapt your approach so that you sort of compliment theirs, so that so we don't really go in and say, 'I've been learning about dialogic teaching so I'm going to do dialogic teaching, because they're like, 'Oh, no, we're doing writing this week.' So I think there is a big divide about university training and school-based training and I think it's quite hard to make links between the two, particularly when you're in school because obviously it's a pressured environment and you've got to act on the day, whereas university is a nice supportive environment, you discuss things with a group of students and you know, you all agree with each other. Yeah, it's very separate.

200 Me: Next question... As part of the unit I have used several popular culture texts as starting points for our ALS discussions. Did any of these texts help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently?

210 Student P: It certainly; it made me approach my writing differently because... it just made me engage more with your sessions because the references you were using were ones that I could recognise and appreciate – I know that some people don't like Star Trek or have never seen Amélie but you know as soon as you mentioned that I was like all wow, I know about this, I'm going to talk about this with authority – so you know that really made me prick up my ears and that whole approach where you can use any source and you don't know where ideas are going to come from, so it made me go home and when I watched The Wire I was like 'Oh, that really made me think about this.' And you know, I was just watching something and because I had that mind-set I was trying to make links with my own personal life and my writing, so I was watching a programme about doctors being taught how to be doctors and I thought, and it made me think 'Aw, that's really what I'm writing about in my own piece' and it made me write a paragraph that is going to go in my final thing, and you know making that link between, you know, popular

culture and university life was really helpful for me. As far as teaching goes, I don't think it will help my teaching necessarily, the main thing I thought is that it has made me write a better assignment and hopefully you know that means I'll be able to get a better class of degree, a better class of job or whatever but it definitely helped me in my student life  
220 but I don't know about my teaching career.

230

240

**K/1:2011**

**Student K interview 1: April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011**

Me: The Teaching Studies unit has been structured around writing. You have been asked to write journal entries, a shared paper and then finally an individual paper. How do you feel towards writing in general?

- 250 Student K: It scares me a little. I'm very apprehensive towards writing just because, especially since coming to university, I don't feel that my writing is as academic as it should be at university level and all those big horrible words just confuse me and I don't feel that I can put them into my own writing. In regards to the... I like working in the group we had. We've known each other since we started so it was a good group, but again, I felt that my ability, my level of writing was much lower than theirs...

Me: Oh really...

Student K: Yeah, so it kind of made me feel a bit apprehensive but I liked working with them so... I felt I let them down sometimes but...

...

- 260 Me: As part of the unit I have used several popular culture texts as starting points for our ALS discussions. Did any of these texts help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently?

Student K: Er, right OK. I love it when you use those type of popular culture texts, I love watching films [laughs] and I can relate to them more than if you gave me a piece of text – I'm able to relate to the films more. In terms of the Harry Potter one, my assignment obviously is about my ideal teacher self and every time I was writing about it made me picture Harry Potter [laughs] sitting in front of the mirror, so it has helped me in terms of my writing, in understanding it better and it has helped me reflect more on who I want to be.

- 270 Me: Oh, so that's a good thing?

Student K: Yeah.

Me: So do you think ...you've talked about Harry Potter, do you think... I'm only asking this because it's come up in other interviews that I have done, do you think the choice of the text makes the difference?

Student K: I think so and I've never watched Amélie before so I couldn't really relate with it properly whereas Student P was sat there saying all these things about it [laughs]. He knew everything about it but because I didn't have that and I haven't seen it before. I mean, once I've seen something, then I can pick up on things after I've watched it but that was the first time I've watched it as well so...

- 280 Me: It's a good point. Erm... and just finally what connections, if any, did you make between the texts I presented and your own?

Student K: Erm... I mean the only... it wasn't really... I like using them kind of texts when I'm teaching myself erm... but... [whispers] I don't know what else to say.

Me: It's a hard question. I suppose I think that I mean erm... one of the things that I'm looking at in this research is how erm... we find connections between texts and things that you probably wouldn't have thought of at first, so I was trying to, when we looked at Grease for example, I wouldn't have necessarily thought that anyone would sit and watch Grease and think it had anything to do with their teaching, erm...

Student K: Oh I see.

290 Me: But then maybe I thought ... well the idea was that some of you what sit there and think 'oh well maybe that has got something to do with teaching.'

Student K: [laughs] Yeah, I er... I know what you mean now, yeah – I suppose I would never have actually considered looking at it as if that's got anything to do with teaching until you said, but then I do find that when I'm watching films... what's that film I've just watched, it's got Adam Sadler in, Oh, Grown Ups.

Me: Oh, I've not seen it.

300 Student K: It's a good film but the whole time I was watching it I was thinking about me being a teacher because it's got children in it and technology and how they are not really a child anymore. Them sort of films, I'll always reflect on me being a teacher but again I think it's more... when it's an explicit link like that. But Grease, I don't think I would have linked it to me being a teacher.

Me: I do see...So, just to summarise then, I think what you're saying is... if the connection is... you need to see the connection readily rather than finding it yourself.

Student K: Yes.

Me: Is that fair? Is that a fair thing for me to say?

Student K: Yeah.

310

**K/2:2011**

**Student K interview 2: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

Me: The Teaching Studies unit has been structured around writing. You have been asked to write journal entries, a shared paper and then finally an individual paper. How do you feel towards writing in general? I've broken it down into those three things because I  
320 think of the process of writing like that but if you think of it differently that's fine.

Student K: OK, well, in regard to the action learning set and learning journal it was good in your action learning sets to read other people's learning journal extracts. When you're in school – I've always been by myself you see.

Me: Oh have you?

Student K: Yeah, so I've never had any other students so I don't get to see how other people are doing or if what I'm thinking, other people are thinking, so it was good to see  
330 that all of us have had some issues that relate to each other and that we're not the only ones going through difficult things.

Me: OK.

Student K: Ok, so that was helpful and the more they talk about things, the more I could write things down and my ideas came into my head as well ...

340

350

**M/1:2011**

**Student M interview 1: 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

Me: OK, As part of the unit I have used several popular culture texts as starting points for our ALS discussions. Did any of these texts help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently?

360 Student M: Well, I think generally I liked the way you used media because I don't really use the media and I suppose I wouldn't sit at home er... when I watch a film, you know, I like to think, oh they've used that, that's a reference to Charlie Chaplin or something, or reference to this or that or blah, blah, blah.... Sorry, but would I? [Both laugh – Student M has forgotten the question]

Me: It's about making connections between those er...

Student M: I know, because we had the Grease one as well didn't we?

Me: Yeah, so those kind of popular culture texts and your teaching and writing did any of those... I am confusing two questions ... were there any kind of, you know, spark moments where you thought... hold on a second.

370 Student M: Well... er... I'm quite analytical anyway, probably too analytical erm... [some silence]. Well, say the Grease one, I've never been in that situation, I've never felt pressured to try and be this person, you know, I'd rather be the loner than to... fit in with something, so I couldn't relate to that.

Me: Oh, Ok, so that's a good point. So, your ability to relate to the texts that were offered depended on the content of the....

Student M: I suppose I really liked them because it was like the visual as well and it got really good discussions, I don't think, it didn't make me think in a way that I wouldn't think anyway, but yeah, obviously we did... because we were prompted to unpick it, dissect it, so obviously I wouldn't ... if I was watching Amélie I wasn't looking for those things but then you think 'oh yeah', but I wouldn't initially have.

Me: So, it made you look at the media thing that I offered you differently but it didn't make you look at your own teaching or writing differently.

380 Student M: No.

Me: Ok, which is a fair enough response. Erm, so and I think you've already answered this question a little bit. Did you connect any of those texts...

Student M: The Rainbow Fish

Me: Why?

Student M: Saying the different perspectives and how the glittery fish whatever, the special one, was seen as, and how people make assumptions and how the other person

can deal with it and you know, different personalities and people view things in different ways. Er... I can't remember the story of it now and I've done it at school as well. Amélie, that was about her father wasn't it. Erm... not really, not for me, for school. I mean our  
390 discussion of it related to her father and how she wanted to be the daughter, so in that sense... I've got a good relationship with my parents, with my dad so not in relation to teaching, no...

Me: Ok, is there anything else you want to say...

Student M: I mean like Grease was about peer pressure and stuff and I haven't really had any experience of that.

Me: OK, so it was almost the story told in those texts... for them to connect to your teaching and/or your learning in University er... it was the connection between the concrete aspects... so if I can relate to what...

Student M: Yeah

400 Me: ... is in that story, then I can make the connections between that and my writing and teaching. So The Rainbow Fish worked because you are familiar with it...

Student M: Yeah..

Me: But if you can't relate to ....

Student M: Yeah

Me: What's happening say...

Student M: Yeah.

Me: It doesn't work.

Student M: Yeah

410



**Student C interview 1: April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011**

420 Me: Moving away now from writing more generally and onto something more specific, as part of the unit I have used several popular culture texts as starting points for our ALS discussions. Did any of these texts help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently?

Student C: Erm well, I think particularly the Amélie one and I think it's probably because I think it is a film that I would choose to watch, you know it's my sort of genre or whatever and you know, it's the idea of looking at a sub-text, is the sort of words that came into my head which is what we are expected to do I imagine with say the Learning Journal and that's what I struggle with. You know it's like you say, well I actually like this because of this, and only look at the surface, well it sort of forces you to look at then perhaps  
430 other ideas. I mean, I don't really watch that many films...

Me: Do you not?

Student C: No, well I work at a theatre, so I go the theatre quite a lot, erm... and if I ever watch a film I think, aw, I should do that more often and then I don't seem to have the time. Anyway, that's off the point. So the other films, like that Harry Potter one, I'm really bad at suspending my imagination, I know that's not... I just sit there and think, really? I know that, that Amélie one is sort of fantasyish, but yeah, anyway, it's that idea of looking at a subtext which is something that I struggle with, so yeah it enabled me to do that. I imagined it as like a sort of film club or book club, you know, where people sit  
440 around and say, well this and this happened and in a book club they go you know, well such and such a character was like that because of this and someone else in the book club will; go, well I thought it was because of this erm... which is what I think, you want us to do with our experiences or our learning journal extracts, so again it made me think about the subtext to my practice I suppose.

Me: Good, that's a good answer. And just the last question what connections, if any, did you make between the texts I presented and your own?

Student C: [long pause]

Me: Did any of them resonate with you for particular reasons?

Student C: Not really. Like I said only the Amélie one because it's about... if I read a book or watch a film generally it's about people or how they interact, why they behave in a  
450 certain way and I think that's the only one that really resonated with me for that reason. You know, I like to imagine that it could maybe happen. You know when you're looking at any film or play or book, if you are seeing people interact with each other, then I think that I can relate to it in some way... anything else I just think... Star Wars... I just think... my mums such a Trekkie and I just think after being made to watch it, I just think – ah. And I know a lot of it is based on morals and things like that but you know... not really.

## **C/2:2011**

### **Student C interview 2: June 15<sup>th</sup> 2011**

460 Me: OK, so what did you learn from the process of writing this assignment.

Student C: Er, I think to look further into little things. Something as small as pronouncing something wrong, opens up a whole other side to my behaviour, do you know what I mean? Erm, yeah and it made me quite sort of disappointed in myself for doing it in some ways erm... but also made me think... erm... again it's about that teacher I want to be and it made me think about, I think that I have a lot of friends who are quite sort of career driven, you know they're kind of always working on their career all of the time and moving up the sort of career ladder and I felt sort of by doing that you almost compromise the children... do you see what I mean... perhaps I've not phrased that very well. Erm, but it made me realise that I can do the two you know erm... I suppose that's it really.

470

Me: So, just because, I think that lots of people consider teaching to be quite a selfless kind of job.

Student C: Yeah, yeah...

Me: And you know, I'm doing it to give something back and perhaps you've realised that yeah that's OK, but I want something as well.

480

Student C: Yeah, well, I want to be good at it and you know be recognised as a professional in myself but you know, surely the two go hand-in-hand erm... and you know, I don't feel as selfish about saying that I suppose. The unit as a whole, the whole talking situation and the group stuff really helped I mean, I know you can't tell us the mark but erm I feel the assignment was a better one than I had done before just through talking as well as writing, definitely.

Me: So the talk helped... for you the talk helped you write something that you felt was better

Student C: Yeah, yeah, undoubtedly. Yeah, you know even if, even if the marks not better looking deeper into stuff you know... I like to think that I've become slightly more academic, I don't know (laughs) even in my thinking rather than just my writing erm ... I think it was a better assignment and I think that was down to the talking and you know someone saying 'have you thought about this', like no, I hadn't thought about that.

490

500 **B/1:2011**

**Student B interview 1: April 4<sup>th</sup> 2011**

Me: Erm, alright thank you – these are slightly on a different topic I suppose, a little bit to do with the same kind of thing but just moving around to talk about the media stuff that we've done in sessions. As part of the unit I have used several popular culture texts as starting points for our ALS discussions. Did any of these texts help you to consider your own teaching or writing differently?

510 Student B: I think the one for me was The Rainbow Fish, you know about looking at things from different points of view and how you can use text differently, you know when you pick something up you always think of the most obvious thing and I think sometimes that's why children get a bit bored in lessons because a lot of the time we do the thing that comes to us most naturally and we don't like to put ourselves in uncomfortable situations in case something goes wrong whereas when you're looking at it from different points of view it enables you to do that more.

Me: Can you explain what you mean a little bit?

520 Student B: Well, cos you kind of think, well, I never thought that someone else would think that and I could go along that route but you're a bit unsure because if it's not your own... or your first way of looking at it, or your own opinion...not as comfortable with it, so it was like when I'm teaching I always tend to stick with things that I'm secure with, that I know and I don't want to do something that I'm not quite sure about in case it goes wrong in a way, whereas when we're looking at like my journal from different points of view, it's like more of a risk to take.

Me: That makes sense then doesn't it because it's ... I suppose part of the unit and part of the reason of kind of showing you these things to challenge the sort of agreed norms, something becomes acceptable and we just kind of go along with it because it's comfortable and it's safe isn't it?

530 Student B: Yeah, it's what we're used to, yeah. Whereas I think that is why some children think 'aw, we doing that again' or their not interested because we don't kind of say anything different and it's what they expect to hear especially you know when you get further into education and you get into key stage two, they're so used to hearing like the same things.

Me: Yeah, that's really true it's about that idea of children knowing there's a right answer, or getting very used to the idea that there is a right answer and I think starting to challenge that is really very difficult.

Student B: Yeah, cos they don't like it if there isn't a right answer, I don't think.

## Appendix B – Consent Forms

page	contents	relation to/reference in main thesis
251	Written consent from Yemena and Sarah via e-mail correspondence	Analysis of student writing in Chapter 2
254	An example of the consent form given and signed by participants from research cycle one: 2010-2011	Chapter 6 – Design of the study section
256	An example of the consent form given and signed by participants agreeing to be interviewed from research cycle one: 2010-2011	Chapter 6 – Design of the study section
257	An example of the consent form given and signed by participants from research cycle two: 2011-2012	Chapter 6 – Design of the study section
259	Signed copies of consent forms for those student that chose to have their contribution to the study recognised by being named	Chapter 6 – Design of the study section Chapter 8 – students' names included in presentation of data

### Written consent from Yemena via e-mail correspondence

> Date: Wed, 30 Dec 2009 11:52:53 +0000  
> From: M.J.Harrison@mmu.ac.uk  
> To: [REDACTED]  
> Subject: Research on Writing  
>  
> Hi [REDACTED],  
> I hope you remember me - I was your Teaching Studies tutor last year.  
> I'm putting together some research on how students on ITT courses use  
> writing as a tool for professional development and I was wondering  
> whether I could have your permission to use extracts of your TS  
> assignment as data. The extracts might appear in any research  
> papers/conference presentations I prepare.  
> The focus won't be on your writing as such, rather how tutors can ensure  
> that writing for students is a productive activity.

> If you could let me if this would be OK I'd really appreciate it.  
> Hope you're having a nice Christmas break.  
> Kind regards  
> Michaela

Yes thats fine, you can use my assignment. Hope you have a good christmas too.

### **Written consent from Sarah via e-mail correspondence**

> >>> [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]> 27/04/2010 21:57 >>>  
>  
>  
> Hi, just to let you know I handed in the research unit today, wanted to  
> get it out the way before I head off on my travels. I payed the  
> resubmission fee and filled in all the forms and so on. I presume I will  
> recieve emails/letters explaining wether I passed and things. As I am  
> away for a while, it would be great if you could contact me through  
> email if you need me for any reason. Thanks for all your help.  
>  
> Kind regards, [REDACTED]. x  
>  
> Date: Wed, 28 Apr 2010 11:02:56 +0100  
> From: M.J.Harrison@mmu.ac.uk  
> To: [REDACTED]  
> Subject: Re:  
>  
> Hi [REDACTED],  
> Wow , you got that done quickly!  
>  
> I'll get in contact if there is anything you need to know.  
>  
> Also, I was wondering if you wouldn't mind doing me a favour. I am  
> doing a bit of research on student writing. I am planning to write my  
> PhD thesis on this and need to gather some data that I can use. I still  
> have your Teaching Studies assignment from last year and if you don't  
> mind I'd like to use bits of your writing in a research paper I'm  
> putting together. It will of course all be anonymous. If your happy for  
> me to do this could you please write me a quick e-mail explaining that  
> you are happy for me to use sections of your writing as data in a

> research paper.

>

> Thanking you in advance

>

> Enjoy your holiday

> Michaela

> Michaela Harrison

> Senior Lecturer - Education Studies

> Year Three Cohort Leader

> Link Tutor - Oldham

> Institute of Education

> Manchester Metropolitan University

> Didsbury

>

> [REDACTED]

>

> Before acting on this email or opening any attachments you should read

> the

> Manchester Metropolitan University's email disclaimer available on its

> website

> <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/emaildisclaimer>

>>> [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]> 05/05/10 10:46 AM >>>

yea, thats fine by me. hope the rest of your year isnt too stressful.

[REDACTED]

Thanks [REDACTED]

Michaela

## **An example of the consent form given and signed by participants from research cycle one: 2010-2011**

### **Consent Form**

#### Project Information:

As part of a Doctorate in Education I am conducting a small scale study into the purpose and scope of student writing. The project will focus on the writing produced by students undertaking Initial Teacher Training qualifications and will explore the connection between the writing process and professional development. The aim of the project is to question the conceptualisation of progress within assessed written work and suggest possible alternatives.

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

I have read and understood the project information above. ☐

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☐

I agree to take part in the project. ☐

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part. ☐

*Select only one of the next two options:*

I would like my name used where what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. ☐

I do not want my name used in this project. ☐

I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project. ☐

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs but my name will not be used unless I requested it above. ☐

I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of that data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form. ☐

I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form.



I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Michaela Harrison



_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Michaela Harrison	<i>MJ Harrison</i>	07/12/10
Researcher	Signature	Date

Contact details for further information: Names, phone, email addresses, etc.



## **An example of the consent form given and signed by participants agreeing to be interviewed from research cycle one: 2010-2011**

### **Interview Release Agreement**

The interviews will be semi-structured and based upon qualitative research methods and values<sup>45</sup>.

I consent to the recording of my statements and grant Michaela Harrison the right to copy, reproduce, and use all or a portion of the statements (the "Interview") for incorporation in any publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that unless I requested otherwise on my original consent form (signed \_\_\_\_\_) my contributions will be anonymised.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

---

<sup>45</sup> Kvale (1996:30) sets out key characteristics of qualitative research interviews, which should do the following:

- Use natural language to gather and understand qualitative knowledge.
- Elicit descriptions of specific situations and actions, rather than generalities.
- Adopt a deliberate openness to new data and phenomena, rather than being too prestructured.
- Focus on specific ideas and themes, i.e. have direction, but avoid being too tightly structured.
- Accept the ambiguity and contradictions of situations where they occur in participants, if this is a fair reflection of the ambiguous and contradictory situation in which they find themselves.
- Accept that the interview may provoke new insights and changes in the participants themselves.
- Be a positive and enriching experience for all participants.

## **An example of the consent form given and signed by participants from research cycle two: 2011-2012**

### **Consent Form**

#### Project Information:

As part of a Doctorate in Education I am conducting a small scale study into the purpose and scope of student writing. The project will focus on the writing produced by students undertaking Initial Teacher Training qualifications and will explore the connection between the writing process and professional development. The aim of the project is to question the conceptualisation of progress within assessed written work and suggest possible alternatives.

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

I have read and understood the project information above. ☐

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☐

I agree to take part in the project. ☐

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part. ☐

*Select only one of the next two options:*

I would like my name used where what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. ☐

I do not want my name used in this project. ☐

I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project. ☐

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I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of that data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form. ☐

I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and

other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form.



I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Michaela Harrison



_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Michaela Harrison	<i>MJ Harrison</i>	10/01/12
Researcher	Signature	Date

Contact details for further information: Names, phone, email addresses, etc.

## Signed copies of consent forms for those student that chose to have their contribution to the study recognised by being named

### Consent Form

#### Project Information:

As part of a Doctorate in Education I am conducting a small scale study into the purpose and scope of student writing. The project will focus on the writing produced by students undertaking Initial Teacher Training qualifications and will explore the connection between the writing process and professional development.

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

I have read and understood the project information above. ☒

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I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form. ☒

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Michaela Harrison ☒

Tom Arrandale  
Name of Participant

  
Signature

10/01/2012  
Date

Contact details for further information

Email address



Michaela Harrison  
Researcher

Signature

10/01/12  
Date

## Consent Form

### Project Information:

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*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

- I have read and understood the project information above. ☒
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☒
- I agree to take part in the project. ☒
- I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part. ☒
- Select only one of the next two options:
- I would like my name used where what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. ☒
- I do not want my name used in this project. ☐
- I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project. ☒
- I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs but my name will not be used unless I requested it above. ☒
- I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of that data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form. ☒
- I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form. ☒
- I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Michaela Harrison ☒

Laura Clarke  
Name of Participant

Laura Clarke  
Signature

19/9/11  
Date

Contact details for further information

Email address

[REDACTED]

Michaela Harrison  
Researcher

Signature

19/09/11  
Date

## Consent Form

### Project Information:

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Please tick the appropriate boxes

I have read and understood the project information above.



I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.



I agree to take part in the project.



I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.



Select only one of the next two options:

I would like my name used where what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.



I do not want my name used in this project.



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I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form.



I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Michaela Harrison



Sinead Kelly  
Name of Participant

Shuly  
Signature

19/9/11  
Date

Contact details for further information

Email address

Michaela Harrison  
Researcher

Signature

19/09/11  
Date

## Consent Form

### Project Information:

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Please tick the appropriate boxes

I have read and understood the project information above.



I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.



I agree to take part in the project.



I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.



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I do not want my name used in this project.



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I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form.



I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Michaela Harrison



Rebecca Marshall  
Name of Participant

R Marshall  
Signature

10-1-12  
Date

Contact details for further information

Email address

[REDACTED]

Michaela Harrison  
Researcher

Signature

10/01/12  
Date

## Consent Form

### Project Information:

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*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

I have read and understood the project information above. ☒

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☒

I agree to take part in the project. ☒

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I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form. ☒

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Michaela Harrison ☒

Awen Kilmer  
Name of Participant

[Signature] 10/1/12  
Signature Date

Contact details for further information

Email address [REDACTED]

Michaela Harrison  
Researcher

Signature

10/01/12  
Date



## Appendix C – SATs attainment data

page	contents	relation to/reference in main thesis
264	Table 1: Percentage of pupils gaining National Curriculum assessment Level 2 or above at age 7, and Level 4 or above at age 11.	Referred to in Chapter 5, under the subtitle, 'Raising standards – the tyranny of common sense.' Specific data referred to, highlighted yellow.
265	Table A17: Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 tests: reading and writing.	Introduction to Talk for Writing, beginning of Chapter 8.

**Table 1: Percentage of pupils gaining National Curriculum Assessment Level 2 or above at age 7 (Key Stage 1 (KS1), and Level 4 or above at age 11 Key Stage 2 (KS2)**

Date	KS1 : Age 7		KS2 : Age 11		
	English	Maths	English	Maths	Science
1992	77 <sup>2</sup>	78			
1995	76	78	48 <sup>3</sup>	44	
1996	80	80	58	54	62
2000	81/84 <sup>4</sup>	90	75	72	85
2002	84/82	90	75	73	86
2003	84/81	90	75	73	87
2004	85/81	90	77	74	86
2005	85/82 <sup>5</sup>	91	79	75	86
2006			79	75	86

(Wyse et al., 2010:19).

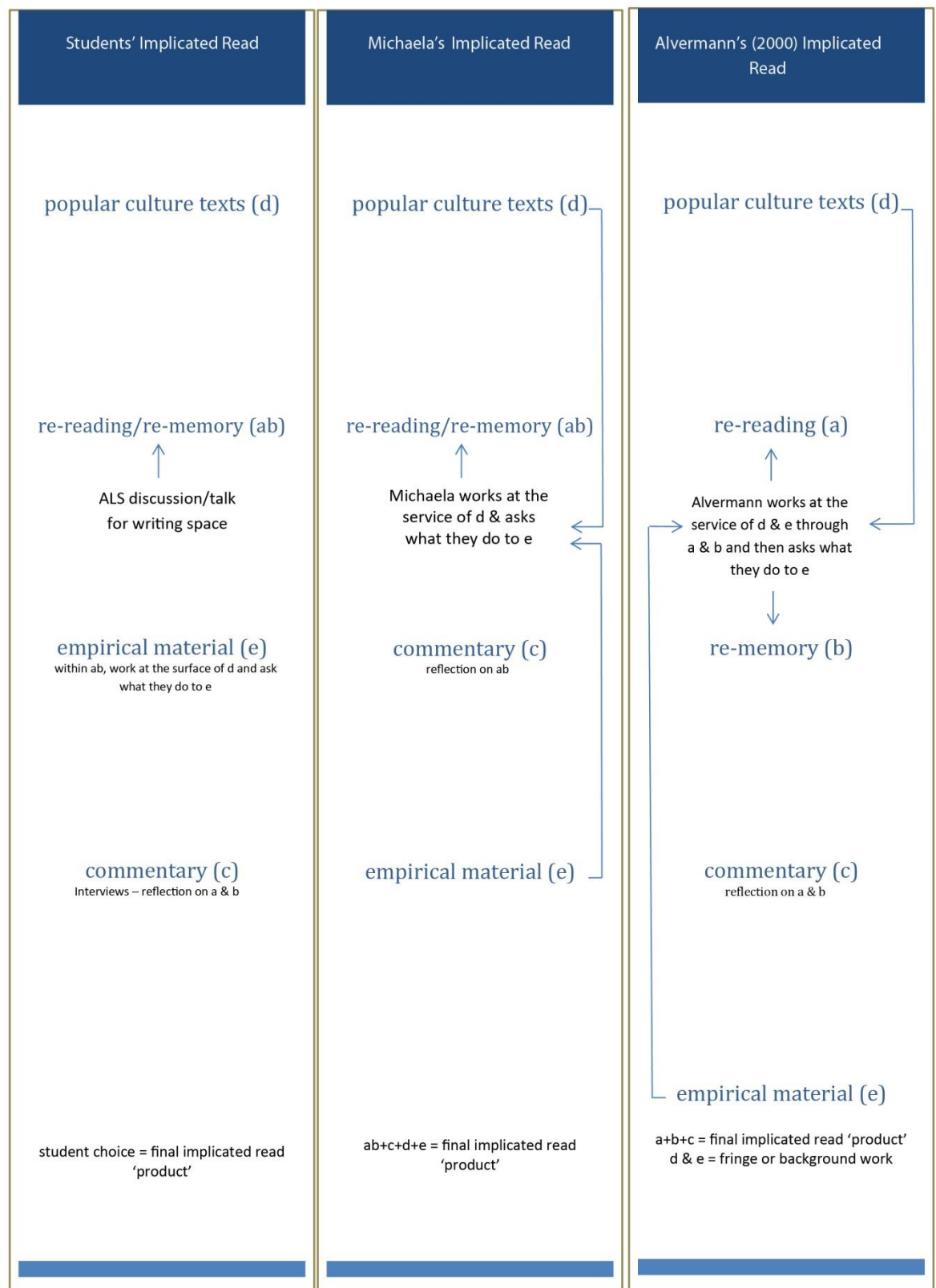
**Table A17 Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 tests: reading and writing**

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<i>Reading</i>										
Boys	63	64	75	80	78	77	78	79	82	79
Girls	71	79	82	86	85	83	84	87	87	87
All pupils	67	71	78	83	82	80	81	83	84	83
<i>Writing</i>										
Boys	45	45	47	48	50	52	52	56	55	59
Girls	62	61	62	63	65	68	69	71	72	75
All pupils	53	53	54	55	57	60	60	63	63	67

Source: Data supplied by DfES; 2006 figures are provisional.

(Cassen and Kingdon, 2007:76)

## Appendix D – diagrammatic representations of the implicated read



## Appendix E – Resources to support students' implicated readings

### Ideas for how we might analyse stuff



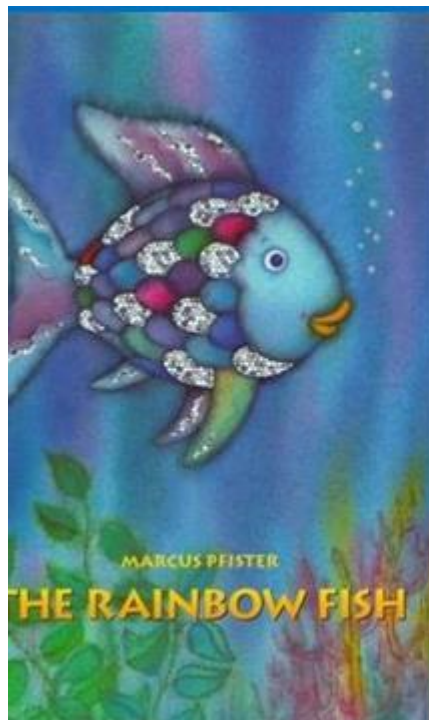
In your groups, read the journal entry offered.

Then, consider the Star Trek text.

How do the two texts connect with one another?

How does one, effect how you read the other?

How might this process disrupt your quest for meaning?



In your groups, read the journal entry offered.

We could look for meanings...

or

We could ask...

How does this text connect with The Rainbow Fish?

What does one, do to the other?

## Appendix F – The plot and main characters of Star Trek: First Contact

page	contents	relation to/reference in main thesis
268	A summary of the plot of Star Trek: First Contact	Contextualises the transcript offered in Chapter 8
269	A character profile of Borg	Contextualises the transcript offered in Chapter 8
270	A character profile of Data	Contextualises the transcript offered in Chapter 8
272	A transcript of extracts from the film	Contextualises the transcript offered in Chapter 8.

### A summary of the plot of Star Trek: First Contact

*Star Trek* is an American science-fiction series set in the future which documents the adventures of humans and aliens who serve in Starfleet, the space-borne humanitarian and peacekeeping armada of the United Federation of Planets.

(Wikipedia, 2014: online)

#### Star Trek: First Contact

##### The Plot

Captain (of Starfleet's Enterprise E) Jean-Luc Picard awakens from a nightmare in which he relived his assimilation by the cybernetic Borg six years earlier. Starfleet informs him of a new Borg attack against Earth, but orders the USS *Enterprise-E* to stay away so as to not introduce an "unstable element" to the fight. Learning that the fleet is losing the battle, the *Enterprise* crew disobeys orders and heads for Earth, where a single, damaged Borg Cube opposes a group of Starfleet vessels. After Picard hears Borg communications in his mind, he orders the fleet to concentrate its firepower on a seemingly unimportant section of the Borg ship. The Cube is destroyed after launching a smaller sphere ship towards planet Earth.

The *Enterprise* crew destroy the sphere. Just before they manage to do so, Borg teleport undetected onto the *Enterprise*. They invade the *Enterprise*, and begin to assimilate its crew and modify the ship. Picard and his team attempt to reach engineering so they can disable the Borg with its corrosive coolant.

(Wikipedia, 2014:online)

## A character profile of Borg

Borg (Enemy Race of the the United Federation of Planets)

**Borg** is a collective proper noun for a fictional alien race that appears as recurring antagonists in various incarnations of the American television and film *Star Trek* franchise. The Borg are a collection of species that have been turned into cybernetic organisms functioning as **drones** of the **Collective**, or **the hive**. A pseudo-race, dwelling in the *Star Trek*

universe, the Borg force other species into their collective and connect them to "the hive mind"; the act is called **assimilation** and entails violence, abductions, and injections of microscopic machines called nanoprobes. The Borg's ultimate goal is "achieving perfection".



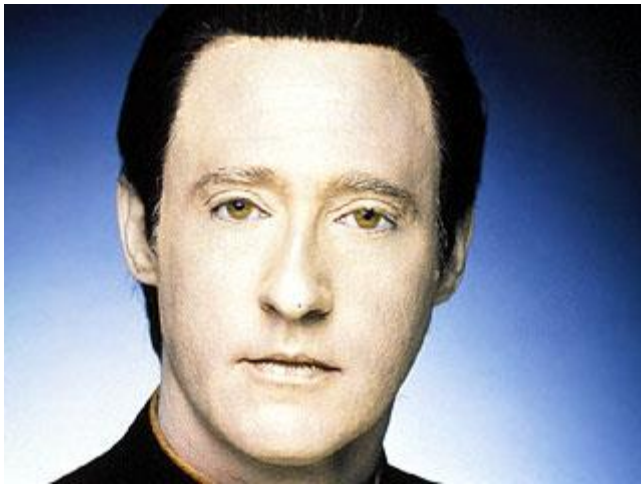
(TrekCore: no date)

Aside from being the main threat in *Star Trek: First Contact*, the Borg play major roles in *The Next Generation* and *Voyager* television series, primarily as an invasion threat to the United Federation of Planets, and serve as the way home to the Alpha Quadrant for isolated Federation starship *Voyager*. The Borg have become a symbol in popular culture for any juggernaut against which "resistance is futile".

The Borg manifest as cybernetically enhanced humanoid drones of multiple species, organized as an interconnected collective, the decisions of which are made by a hive mind, linked by subspace radio. The Borg inhabit a vast region of space in the Delta Quadrant of the galaxy, possessing thousands of vessels. They operate toward the fulfilment of one purpose: to "add the biological and technological distinctiveness of other species to [their] own... [in pursuit of] perfection". The concept of perfection is the unifying idea at the core of the Borg. The pursuit of an unemotional, mechanical perfection is the Borg's only motivation. This is achieved through forced assimilation, a process which takes individuals and technology, enhancing and controlling them. Originally presented as an autonomous collective, the ideas of a Borg Queen and central control were introduced in *First Contact*.

(Wikipedia, 2014a:online)

## A character profile of Data



(Star Trek: 2014)

**Final Rank:** Lieutenant Commander

**Last assignment:** Second Officer/Science Officer, *U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701-E* (was promoted to First Officer, but died prior to position taking effect)

**Full Name:** Data

**Date of birth:** Permanently re-activated Feb. 2, 2338 (initial activation unknown)

**Place of birth:** Omicron Theta science colony

**Parents:** Created by Dr. Noonien Soong and Dr. Juliana O'Donnell Soong Tainer

**Education:** Starfleet Academy, 2341-45

**Marital status:** Single

**Children:** One, deceased

**Quarters:** Formerly, Enterprise-D: Deck 2/Room 3653

**Date of death:** 2379

**Place of death:** Destroyed with Reman ship *Scimitar* in line of duty

**Service Awards:** Starfleet Command Decoration for Valor; Starfleet Command Decoration for Gallantry; Medal of Honor, with Clusters; Legion of Honor; The Starcros'

### Psychological Profile: Report of Ship's Counselor Deanna Troi

Although the outlook did not pick up steam until his *Enterprise* posting after 26 years of existence, Data has quite simply wished to be more human and experience as much of that condition's depths and shadows as his adaptive programming can approximate - with experiments in everything from art, acting, and poetry to keeping a pet cat Spot and imitating humanisms ranging from laughter, sneezing and whistling to dance, facial hair grooming and bedtime routines.

Even with that goal, Data turned down a chance to be human offered by Q in 2364, quoting Shakespeare's "To thine own self be true," but inched closer to his goal with the discovery of an "emotion chip" created by his builder, Dr. Noonien Soong. Although he delayed using it for over a year, the chip when finally installed in 2371 caused a near-overload until Data began learning the complexities of the new world just opened. Humor was a concept that largely eluded him until that point.

(Star Trek, 2014a: online)



## **A transcript of extracts from the film Star trek: First Contact**

**Setting: The bridge of Enterprise-E**

**Scene content: Captain Picard and his team, plan their attack on Borg**

PICARD: The first thing they'll do in engineering is establish a collective, a central point from which they can control the hive. The problem is if we begin firing particle weapons in engineering there's a risk we may hit the warp core. I believe our goal should be to puncture one of the plasma coolant tanks. Data?

DATA: Excellent idea. Plasma coolant will liquefy organic material on contact.

WORF: But the Borg are not entirely organic.

PICARD: True, but like all cybernetic lifeforms they cannot survive without their organic components.

WORF: I have ordered all weapons to be set on a rotating modulation. The Borg will adapt quickly. We will be able to fire twelve shots at most.

PICARD: One other thing. ...You may encounter Enterprise crewmembers who've already been assimilated. Don't hesitate to fire. Believe me you'll be doing them a favour. ...Let's go.

### **New Scene**

**Setting: Enterprise-E corridors**

**Scene content: Security parties, led by Captain Picard and Lieutenant Worf, discover Borg cubicles**

DATA: Captain, I believe I am feeling ...anxiety. It's an intriguing sensation. A most distracting...

PICARD: Data, I'm sure it's a fascinating experience. Perhaps you should deactivate your emotion chip for now.

DATA: Good idea, sir. ...Done.

PICARD: Data, there are times when I envy you.

(Worf's party is startled by a hatch opening)

CRUSHER: It's only me!

WORF: Are you all right?

CRUSHER: Yes but we have wounded here.

WORF: Lopez, get these people back to deck fourteen.

CRUSHER: There was a civilian. A woman from the twenty-first century. We got separated.

WORF: We'll watch for her.

CRUSHER: Worf, she has no idea what's going on. Try to find her.

(Picard's party discover Borg drones and assimilated crewmembers)

PICARD: Lower your weapons. They'll ignore us 'til they consider us a threat.

(the two parties meet up outside main engineering)

PICARD: The manual release? ...Mister Worf, hold this position.

COMPUTER VOICE: Manual release is on-line.

PICARD: Perhaps we should just knock?

(Borg drones begin to stir)

PICARD: Data.

WORF: Ready phasers!  
(a firefight develops)  
PICARD: Data, cover me.  
WORF: Captain, they have adapted!  
(Picard succeeds in opening main engineering)  
PICARD: Regroup on deck fifteen. Don't let them touch you!  
DATA: Captain!  
PICARD: Data!  
(Data is dragged under the closing door into engineering. The Borg continue spreading out, assimilating crewmembers as they find them)  
PICARD: Here!  
(Picard finds a hatch sending a crewmember down through it)  
LYNCH: Captain! ...Help. ...Please, help.  
(Picard shoots the assimilated officer. )

(Chrisse, 2014: online)

## Appendix G – The Map-Woman by Carol Ann Duffy

The Map-Woman (Abridged)

By Carol-Ann Duffy

A woman's skin was a map of the town  
where she'd grown from a child.  
When she went out, she covered it up  
with a dress, with a shawl, with a hat,  
with mitts or a muff, with leggings, trousers  
or jeans, with an ankle-length cloak, hooded  
and fingertip-sleeved. But – birthmark, tattoo –  
the A-Z street-map grew, a precise second skin,  
broad if she binged, thin when she slimmed,  
a précis of where to end or go back to begin.

Over her breast was the heart of the town,  
from the Market Square to the Picture House  
by way of St Mary's Church, a triangle  
of alleys and streets and walks, her veins  
like shadows below the lines of the map, the river  
an artery snaking north to her neck. She knew  
if you crossed the bridge at her nipple, took a left  
and a right, you would come to the graves,  
the grey-haired teachers of English and History,  
the soldier boys, the Mayors and Councillors,

the beloved mothers and wives, the nuns and priests,  
their bodies fading into the earth like old print  
on a page. You could sit on a wooden bench  
as a wedding pair ran, ringed, from the church,  
confetti skittering over the marble stones,  
the big bell hammering hail from the sky, and wonder  
who you would marry and how, where and when  
you would die, or find yourself in the coffee house  
nearby, waiting for time to start, your tiny face  
trapped in the window's bottle-thick glass like a fly.

She didn't live there now. She lived down south,  
abroad, en route, up north, on a plane or train  
or boat, on the road, in hotels, in the back of cabs  
on the phone; but the map was under her stockings,  
under her gloves, under the soft silk scarf at her throat,  
under her chiffon veil, a delicate braille. Her left knee  
marked the grid of her own estate. When she knelt  
she felt her father's house pressing into the bone,  
heard in her head the looped soundtrack of then –  
a tennis ball repeatedly thumping the wall,

an ice-cream van crying and hurrying on, a snarl of children's shrieks from the overgrown land where the house ran out. The motorway groaned just out of sight. She knew you could hitch from Junction 13 and knew of a girl who had not been seen since she did; had heard of a kid who'd ran across all six lanes for a dare before he was tossed by a lorry into the air like a doll. But the motorway was flowing away, was a roaring river of metal and light, cheerio, au revoir, auf wiedersehen, ciao.

She stared in the mirror as she got dressed, both arms raised over her head, the roads for east and west running from shoulder to wrist, the fuzz of woodland or countryside under each arm. Only her face was clear, her fingers smoothing cream, her baby-blue eyes unsure as they looked at themselves. But her body was certain, an inch to the mile, knew every nook and cranny cul-de-sac, stile, back road, high road, low road, one-way street of her past. There it was, back

to front in the glass. She piled on linen, stain, silk, leather, wool, perfume and mousse and went out. She got in a limousine. The map perspired under her clothes. She took a plane. The map seethed on her flesh. She spoke in a foreign tongue. The map translated everything back to herself. She turned out the light and a lover's hands caressed the map from north to south, lost tourists wandering here and there, all fingers and thumbs, as their map flapped in the breeze.

So one day, wondering where to go next, she went back, drove a car for a night and day, till the town appeared on her left, the stale cake of the castle crumbled up on the hill; and she hired a room with a view and soaked in the bath. When it grew dark, she went out, thinking she knew the place like the back of her hand, but something was wrong. She got lost in arcades, in streets with new names, in precincts and walkways, and found that what was familiar

was only façade. Back in her hotel room, she stripped and lay on the bed. As she slept, her skin sloughed like a snake's, the skin of her legs like stockings, silvery, sheer, like the long gloves of the skin of her arms, the papery camisole from her chest a perfect match for the tissue socks of the skin of her feet. Her sleep peeled her. Lifted a honeymoon thong from her groin, a delicate bra of skin from her breasts, and all of it

patterned A to Z; a small cross where her parents' skulls grinned at the dark. Her new skin showed barely a mark.

She woke and spread the map out on the floor. What was she looking for? Her skin was her own small ghost, a shroud to be dead in, a newspaper for old news to be read in, gift-wrapping, litter, a suicide letter. She left it there, got dressed, checked out, got in the car. As she drove, the town in the morning sun glittered behind her. She ate up the miles. Her skin itched, like a rash, like a slow burn, felt stretched, as though it belonged to someone else. Deep in the bone old streets tunnelled and borrowed, hunting for home.

## **Appendix H – Summaries of student writing and related, explanatory material**

<b>page</b>	<b>contents</b>	<b>relation to/reference in main thesis</b>
277	Summary of Emilia's writing. Submitted for the final assessment of BA 4 Teaching Studies on the Primary Education programme.	Basis for the play in Chapter 10
278	Patch Adams: character profile	Referred to in the play in Chapter 10
289	Summary of Louisa's writing. Submitted for the final assessment of BA 4 Teaching Studies on the Primary Education programme.	Basis for the play in Chapter 10
280	Programme synopsis: Big Fat Gypsy Weddings	Referred to in the play in Chapter 10

### **Summary of Emilia's writing**

Emilia explains how a child in her placement class came to be labelled naughty due to his habit of hurting other children on the playground. The child admits the behaviour and so the question of how to respond to the situation had, in the early stages of her placement, revolved almost exclusively around sanctions to punish and pre-emptive strategies to curtail the behaviour. However, Emilia observes the child on the playground and starts to believe that the incidences are unintentional. The boy is large and 'clumsy'. Emilia is wary of the label 'naughty'. In her Action Learning Set, her peers suggested looking at the situation differently – perhaps the child did not want to lose the label in case it should be replaced with another. He was simply abiding by the 'playground code' which defines how children should behave to get status. Emilia ponders this and considers the implications for her own practice, but then dismisses the idea as probably not being applicable to the circumstances her Learning Journal details. She wonders though whether it is not the misbehaving child that desires this role but the community which he inhabits. The child takes responsibility for hurting the other children and in doing so the aggressor is easily identified and the problem quickly solved.

She resolves to refuse to jump to easy conclusions, especially because in the past her conclusions have been wrong and she has later been 'overwhelmed with guilt'. The issue

remains a 'constant worry' for Emilia. She reasons this is probably why she sought to find contrary evidence to explain the child's behaviour during her school placement.

She questions why the teacher did not look for this evidence too and concludes perhaps she did not know the child well enough. For Emilia, the child's classroom character and his playground nuisances were at odds and this allowed her to question his reputation as a misbehaving child. She wonders whether the advantage of a fresh pair of eyes (hers) on the situation have aided her in this. What will she do when her eyes are no longer fresh?

She looks beyond the label the child has received and she discovers there is more to see. For Emilia, this is reminiscent of Patch Adams, who looks beyond the problem to see the person behind them. She recalls a scene from the film to illustrate.

The student concludes: 'Although, I thought I was well practised in reflection, I actually need to move forward, from thinking about my pedagogy, assessment, targets and the curriculum to reflecting on the moral implications of my actions and the less significant events in the school day. [The child's] situation has enabled me to realise a lot more about myself, school procedures, labelling and how I tackle incidences as a practitioner.'

### **Patch Adams: character profile**

Hunter Doherty 'Patch' Adams (born May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1945, in Washington, D.C.) is an American physician. After graduating from medical school, Adams gained notoriety for his outspoken and quirky form of activism in protest against the medical care system in the U.S. In 1971, he founded the Gesundheit! Institute, a community of medics and other healthcare professionals providing free health and wellbeing services (including boarding and lodgings) to patients and their families. The philosophy of the institute is;

... that one cannot separate the health of the individual from the health of the family, the community, the world, and the health care system itself.

(Patch Adams MD & Gesundheit Institute, 2014:online)

In the early formations of the Gesundheit! Institute, both 'Patch' Adams and his coworkers lived and worked on the site of the care facilities that housed the Institutes, advocating communal living as part of their general approach to, and philosophy for, a more joyous, more healthy, socially and ethically responsible life.

Along with cowriter, Maureen Mylander, Adams wrote a book '*Gesundheit: Good Health Is a Laughing Matter*' detailing his life work and philosophy. Based on the book, Patch Adams the movie was released in 1998. The semi-biographical comedy-drama film starred Robin Williams as Patch.

## Summary of Louisa's assignment

Louisa is concerned for the well-being of one of the children in her class who has a troubled home life. His parents think little of compulsory schooling and would prefer the child to stay at home. The child misbehaves on the playground and in class. Louisa believes that one of the reasons she has become preoccupied with the child is that he subverts the usual teacher-child transaction that Louisa has become used to and which has forged her identity as a teacher (child struggles, notifies teacher, teacher helps, child responds positively). Louisa notes that her normal routine as a teacher has been disrupted. She also ponders the significance of the child's home life and speculates that his behaviour and attitude to school may be a result of him simply prioritising what he sees as more important (compared against her own priorities of educational goals and achievement). She acknowledges that what she was doing in her classroom might not have worked for the child because of its stark contrast to his home life whilst admitting that her knowledge of that home life can only ever be partial.

Louisa goes on to describe how the other children in the class have responded to her spending a disproportionate amount of her time with the boy in question. She finds she is engaged in a 'constant battle' with herself about how to overcome the issue. Louisa explains that since her school placement, she has thought about the situation more from the parents' perspective. She uses Big Fat Gypsy Weddings as a looking glass to see a culture whose values concerning education are different to those popularised by mainstream society. From here she begins to ask questions about the relationship between the home and the school and how it might function to change the perspective of the parents. She realises she has an 'insider's view' of education, she can see why and how it works and therefore has come to value it. She acknowledges that many parents do not have the same advantage. She conjectures that 'a surface level' understanding may result in an inaccurate picture of what school entails. Louisa thinks that the more chances that parents have to see what goes on in school, the more likely they will be to value the institution.

Louisa then looks to the micro-politics of the school in which she has had her placement to provide explanations for the ways in which she initially dealt with the child. She believes that this resulted in her ignoring her 'natural teacher instincts' and instead working towards recreating the practices she believes that those around her wanted to see.

She ends by considering the demands that home, school and the playground put on children and how providing them with the possibility to escape, even for a short time, might be just what they need. She wants to stick to her beliefs, 'but not expect everyone to have the same'.



## **Programme synopsis: Big Fat Gypsy Weddings**

Described on the Channel 4 website as a;

...revealing documentary series that offers a window into the secretive, extravagant and surprising world of gypsies and travellers in Britain today.

(Channel 4, 2014:online)

'Big Fat Gypsy Weddings' was broadcast in the UK on Channel 4 between 2010 and January 2014. The programme explored the lives and traditions of Irish, Romani and British Traveller families. The series at its peak attracted 8.7 million viewers, making it one of the most watched programmes in Channel 4's history. However, the series has also been strongly criticised for its portrayal of the Romani, British and Irish traveller communities it depicts. For example, Jenny McArdle, former editor of Voice of the Traveller magazine, explains that even the title of the documentary contains offence – the use of the word 'Gypsy' neither inclusive of the broad range of traveller cultures represented within the programme content, nor a neutral signifier for the communities the show is intended to document. McArdale describes the proper noun 'Gypsy' as an insult (2010:online).

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